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LITURGY AND WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

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TWELVE DISCOURSES

ON SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH THE

LITURGY AND WORSHIP

OF THE

Church of England.

BY

Charles John

C. J. VAUGHAN, D.D.

VICAR OF DONCASTER.

London and Cambridge:

MACMILLAN AND CO.

M.DCCC.LXVII.

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PREFACE.

Of the following Discourses four were published in 1860 in a work entitled *Revision of the Liturgy*, of which a second Edition is now just exhausted. Four others have appeared in the form of separate Sermons, delivered on various occasions, and published at the time by request. Four are new. All will be found to fall strictly under the present title, *Discourses on Subjects connected with the Liturgy and Worship of the Church of England.*

I have placed in an Appendix a short Essay *On Subscription and Scruples*, which formed the Introduction to

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a publication mentioned above. It was written in 1860, shortly after a Debate in the House of Lords on Liturgical Revision, and under the influence of feelings which later events have tended somewhat to modify. The suggestions of the Royal Commission on Clerical Subscriptions in 1865, followed by prompt and unanimous legislation, have simplified and disembarrassed the whole subject in a manner scarcely less surprising than it is satisfactory. The long series of loose and cumbrous Subscriptions described in the Essay here reprinted, has now given place to one grave and uniform Declaration, *I assent to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and to the Book of Common Prayer, and of Ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons: I believe*

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the doctrine of the United Church of England and Ireland, as therein set forth, to be agreeable to the Word of God: and in Public Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments I will use the form in the said Book prescribed, and none other, except so far as shall be ordered by lawful authority. Such an assurance is no more than may reasonably be asked of those who are to minister in the Congregation: its adoption is in perfect harmony with the principles advocated in this Essay at a time when it was easier to desire than to hope.

The mind of the Church being thus tranquillized on a topic of perpetual personal irritation, we may trust that another Commission, now sitting on Rubric and Ritual, will prosecute its labours in the same general direction

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with like tenderness and with equal success. Much may be effected, in the cause of future comprehension and present charity, by a Rubrical modification without any Liturgical change.

In republishing in this Volume a Discourse on the Athanasian Creed, I do not wish to be understood as expressing a very strong opinion as to the necessity of enforcing its use in the public Services of the Church. One great branch of the Anglican Communion, the Episcopal Church of America, retains the Athanasian Creed amongst its documents without reading it in its worship. For myself, I should regret its disuse on the three great Festivals (at least) of our Christian Year. Yet I had rather that it were retained in the Prayer-Book, like the Articles them-

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selves, as a perpetual, if silent, record of the definitive conclusions of Catholic Theology, than that it should be pared down into a tame and conventional utterance of the popular creed of the nineteenth century. If in some few of its clauses it may seem to trespass upon the debatable ground between candour and courtesy, or to *speak the truth* not quite *in love*[1]; in many more it is a salutary witness against our prevalent vagueness of thought, laxity of belief, and indifference of feeling. Still it must be allowed that a Church reading the Nicene Creed is no renegade if she silences the Athanasian: the express words of the 8th Article will still claim for the *Confession of our Christian Faith, commonly called*

[1] 1 Eph. iv. 15.

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The Creed of Saint Athanasius, the *thorough reception and belief* of English Churchmen: and it may be at least worthy of consideration, whether, if the reading be no longer enforced, an option at least might not be given to the officiating Minister—by the simple substitution of *may* for *shall* in its Rubric—as to its use on certain occasions in the Public Worship of the Church.

In reference to another Discourse, now republished, that on the Burial Service, I have thought it right to add, in a second Appendix, some later thoughts on the same difficult and troublesome question. No real variance, I think, will be discovered between the one and the other. The supplement suggests the addition of some new exceptions to those already recognized

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in the Rubric; thus meeting a practical difficulty without departing from a fundamental principle. But I am bound to confess that I feel an increasing doubt whether indeed this is a subject on which any change can be introduced without stirring more troubles than it could settle.

I earnestly desire that nothing contained in this Volume may minister to any strife or controversy, but only to that godly edifying which is in faith and love.

DONCASTER,
December 4, 1867.

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DISCOURSE I.

TONE OF THE LITURGY.

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TONE OF THE LITURGY.

ISAIAH XXX. 15.

In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.

QUIETNESS is the opposite of excitement; and confidence is the opposite of mistrust.

The text tells in which of these two pairs of qualities the strength of the Church, and the true tone of the Church's worship, is in all ages and under all circumstances to be found. The words have a peculiar pathos in many ears, as having furnished at once the motto and the keynote of a work which has done more to influence the religion of our generation than any other composition of uninspired man.

Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of

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Israel: In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. In returning, not in wandering; in rest, not in unsettlement; in quietness, not in excitement; in confidence, not in mistrust.

Quietness, not excitement; confidence, not mistrust.

1. There is no doubt that excitement has its place in the economy of God. That arousing, that stirring up, that quickening from lethargy, which makes activity a necessity, and existence a delight; that state of conscious vitality, which makes a boy love his game and a man his sport; which varies the monotony of life, and sends forth a whole population to catch a sight of royalty or to gaze with breathless intensity on a contest of strength or a feat of skill; this same thing has its place even in religion. Without excitement there can be no revival; no rising of a dead Church into a living and moving one. Wherever there has been torpor, wherever there has been sleep, wherever there has been

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indifference, there must be excitement before there can be energy. The day of Pentecost was a scene of great excitement: mocking bystanders even said, *These men are full of new wine*[1]. And St Paul seems to recognize the parallel between the excitement of intemperance and the quickened pulsation of grace, when he says in his exhortation to the Ephesians, *Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit*[2]. Or St James: *Is any merry? let him sing psalms*[3].

We presume not to say how much of even physical excitement may be an accompaniment of the work of grace. When we hear of fainting, of palsy, or catalepsy—of a loss of power of motion, of hysterical utterances, or a suspension of the heart's action—as having attended in any instance upon the work of conviction and conversion, we do not scoff at these things; we do not infer either fraud or falsehood; we do not say, *How can the body and the spirit thus mutually act and*

[1] Acts ii. 13. [2] Eph. v. 18.
[3] James v. 13.

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react? there must be fancy, there must be imposture, there will certainly be disappointment and exposure: we rather say, *These signs are not grace: they may possibly herald or betoken it: let us wait—let us see—let us hope: through these ambiguous symptoms may be wrought out —God grant it—a spiritual resuscitation too much needed.* We would pray, for ourselves, to be led by quieter paths: we would desire, for our own Parish and our own Congregation, to be spared these anxious, these obtrusive demonstrations of a power which may be God's, but which may be something widely different: we only say that in quietness, not in excitement, is the strength of the Christian and the strength of the Church; and we read in all which interrupts that quietness, far, far more of reproof than of satisfaction.

And when we are asked to hail as signs of extraordinary hopefulness, agencies, on this side and that, of powerful excitement; when we are taught that no Church is so honoured, and no Town so favoured, and no Ministry so blessed, as that in which excitement is every-

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thing; when we find the whole activity of a generation turned upon the discovery of novel places for a very novel worship, or upon the introduction of an odd and incongruous phraseology into Sermons, for the chance of its arresting some careless or wayside hearer; when in these and a thousand other ways we see the deification of excitement, as though a wayward and scoffing age could be tricked into religion by mere singularity, irreverence, and bad taste; then we are compelled at least to suspend our judgment; to make enormous deductions for motives of idle curiosity, before we can count as gains all the apparent additions to our listeners; to remember who has said, as though to correct vain expectations and to reassure needless misgivings, *In quietness as well as in confidence shall be your strength.* The normal state of a Church is a state of quietness: the most effective of a Church's agencies will ever be the most tranquil.

It is impossible, in the light of this revelation, to view without some misgiving the

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tendency of our times to an increasingly outward growth of religious principle.

Every one must be struck with the change which has taken place, within one generation, in the sort of persons claiming to speak and to be heard on religious questions. Subjects which once interested only the truly devout, subjects which were the meditation of the few in the study and in the closet, are now topics of discussion at every table, of dissection in every newspaper. Mysteries the most profound, and names the most sacred, are bandied about hither and thither wheresoever men congregate for business or amusement. And some persons see in this profanation—it is something, perhaps, to say for it—a diffusion of public interest in the things of revelation. Let us hope that the inference is just. The fact itself must strike sometimes with a painful jar upon the ear and heart of the faithful.

We notice, in particular, a growing desire on the part of the Church itself for opportunities of discussion and debate. Convoca-

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tion first of all, with its defective organization and its impotence for action, its representation of a small section of the Clergy and none of the Laity, its manacled limbs though not gagged mouth; and then, as if one such debating society were insufficient, a multiplication of Church Congresses, revealing without healing our divisions, and ingenious in the discovery of grievances which there is no power and no agreement to remedy; these things—I desire not to speak of them presumptuously, but I would venture to speak plainly—seem to me to be calculated rather to distract than to concentrate the real strength of the Church; rather to call off attention from the realities of her need than to fix it upon the urgencies of her duty. *In quietness*, rather than in excitement, *shall be your strength.*

And then, as the natural consequence of these fallacious hopes of activity, we observe an increasing number of Christian men, and even of Christian Clergymen, devoting time and strength to questions of Liturgical Re-

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vision, instead of calmly and quietly plying the practical tasks to which they have devoted themselves. It is of the very nature of this sort of enquiry, of this application of the microscope to the supposed defects or incoherences of our formularies, to become more and more fruitful in dissatisfaction, and more and more exhaustive of those energies of which the proper field is action. I will venture to say that a Liturgical Reform is one of the practical impossibilities of our time. Rubrical changes there may be; altered terms of subscription there may be: but not, I believe, and I rejoice to believe, in our time, anything to be called Liturgical Reform. There is no body in existence to which any other body would confide it. Each reformer has his own likings and dislikings, his own impatiences and his own tenacities. Not because the Church is unsound or sickly, but because differences of opinion are strong, and mutual concessions reluctant, and comprehensiveness of view rare, and profoundness of learning in this age seldom combined with

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largeness of human knowledge and human dealing—on this account do we give up as unattainable any change which would be certain improvement, or any reconstruction which would indeed *make for peace*[1].

And believing, as I most firmly believe, that Christ's promise to be with His Church always has not failed nor been disappointed, I see in this very difficulty of Church action a sign of His hand and an indication of His will. I believe Him when He says, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*[2]. I believe that that everlasting presence is to be looked for as much in the prohibitions of His Providence as in the impulses of His Spirit. If He, overruling all events, has so ordered the course of this world as to hem in the legislative activity of His Church in any land by a thousand lets and hindrances which it is not hers to put aside, I hear Him saying in imperative tones to that Church, Set thyself to thy proper business: *do the work of an Evangelist*[3], do the work of a Pastor and

[1] Rom. xiv. 19. [2] Matt. xxviii. 20. [3] 2 Tim. iv. 5.

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Teacher: look to thy people at home, look to thy Missions abroad: leave the fancy work of liturgical perfection to a more convenient season: not in the excitement of debate, but in the quietness of vigorous labour, shall be thy strength, and thy blessing, and thy reward.

The backbone of the Church of England is its Presbytery; and the work of its Presbytery lies in its Parishes. Every day taken for the discussion of questions which cannot be settled, and of changes which cannot be effected, is a day lost to the care of souls, and therefore to the true work of the Church. Leave to others, less deeply responsible, less heavily burdened, the perpetual suggestion of fancied improvements, or the thankless ostentation of imagined blemishes. *Go thou, and preach the Kingdom of God*[1]. *It is not meet that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables*[2]; and if not the tables of a charitable distribution, still less surely the tables of a theoretical council-room. *Appoint others*, who have time for it, *over this business: but*

[1] Luke ix. 60. [2] Acts vi. 2.

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we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word[1]. Happy that Church whose ministers are inclined and permitted to carry out that resolution! have taken the measure of conflicting employments, and have deliberately chosen the essential and left the optional!

Already have we seen reason, in one lifetime, to rejoice that the wheels of Church Legislation are heavily clogged and cumbered. We ourselves can point to matters in which ready or even possible action would have been an evil and not a good. Times change, and circumstances, and opinions and feelings too: and oftentimes that which would certainly have been altered by one generation, had opportunity been given, is seen by the next generation to be far better, far more safely, and far more wisely retained. These experiences are the corrections of our impatience: they should all be read in the light of the inspired saying before us, *In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.*

[1] Acts vi. 3, 4.

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And as for the Church and the Church's ministry, so also for each individual soul, would we seek tranquillity and not excitement. We would press upon the remembrance of all—ourselves first of all—the danger of mistaking a delight in hearing, a multiplied attendance on ordinances of worship, or a quickened interest in Christian society and fellowship, for a true, stedfast, earnest walking in the narrow path of eternal life. Everything which brings a man into contact with God Himself, every five minutes of deep heartfelt prayer, every thorough conviction of personal sin, every secret self-denying effort after greater grace and more entire devotion, is worth hours and days and months and years of a mere flocking after the multitude to hear eloquent Sermons, or to add one voice to many in the praises of a popular Theology. Deep, deep within, in that secret place of the heart which no stranger enters, is the true work of God done; he who is never there, he who seldom visits that shrine, he who is a foreigner at home, scarcely know-

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ing the affairs of his own most intimate, most real being, can make no amends for this ignorance by a familiarity with all besides, by any frequency of outward devotion or any multiplication of ostensible exertion. *In quietness,* not in excitement, *shall be your strength.*

2. In quietness, not in excitement; in confidence, not in mistrust.

I use the word mistrust, rather than doubt, as the opposite of that confidence which is spoken of in the text. For my purpose now is not to touch upon any of those distressing topics of religious speculation which have been the anxiety and the torment of these latter days. I would rather speak of that spirit of repose and comfort which our Church Liturgy breathes so persuasively, and which a work already referred to has described as *the soothing tendency of the Prayer-Book*[1]. *In confidence,* not in mistrust.

The whole life of many persons, so far as it has any religious aspect, is spent in the

[1] Preface to *The Christian Year.*

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enquiry, How do I know that I am accepted? What assurance have I in trying to worship? What right have I to lead a Christian life? Must there not be some preliminary experience, some conscious transaction within me, before I can call God my Father, or presume to approach Him through the Son? And thus it comes to pass that the first step is never decisively taken, through a long lifetime, into the region of faith and promise; into the comfort of hope, or into the power of service.

And I venture to think that this hesitation has, in some cases, been the result of a misstatement, or rather a misapplication, of Evangelical doctrine. At a time when long torpor had turned the Church itself into something most unlike its Divine original, and the Christianity of most Christians was a mere *form of godliness*[1], it was natural that holy men of God, roused by His grace into heralds of a soul-stirring Gospel, should address their Congregations on the presumption of a prac-

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 5.

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tical heathenism, and apply without limitation or correction to the nominally Christian Community the very words of an inspired Apostle to the philosophers of Athens or the idolaters of Lystra. That was no time, they felt, for drawing careful distinctions between conditions practically identical. Here, as there, were souls sunk in sin, and lives steeped in worldliness. Here, as there, the proclamation of the Cross was the one, the only remedy; and the theoretical position of the baptized must be overlooked for the time in the actual position of the godless and the sinful. God Himself set His seal to their testimony. That *was* the pressing want of the time then present. A loud, a solemn, a stirring call to repent and believe the Gospel, was the necessity of the generation: and Theology might wait till Religion was listened to. A large revival and a large extension of the Church of Christ has been the fruit of that truly Evangelical Ministry.

But how was it to be with the children of these converts? What was the state of a

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son or a daughter nurtured from infancy in one of these awakened and evangelized homes? Were they to look forward to a time, not yet come, of conversion and transformation? Were they to regard themselves, were they to be dealt with, as standing precisely where the Parent stood before his vital change? The question was evaded—was vaguely answered—was met one way in doctrine, and the other way in practice. A marked period of conversion was spoken of as the necessity of every heir of salvation. Till that time came, there might be hopeful indications; but there could be no reality of safety, and no acceptableness of service. Here and there was found a Parent who sacrificed even the instincts of nature to the logical exigencies of his doctrine. If God was pleased to work, none could let: if God had not so willed, it was idle to influence. God could call here as well as there; in the theatre or the ball-room, as well as in the congregation. This fearful recklessness was to be found, thank God, seldom; and only in those who had

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embraced with a terrible greediness the worst perversions and distortions of a degenerate and debased Calvinism. Far more often, instinct was too strong for Theology; and a Parent who could not in theory dispense with a tangible conversion, was found in practice to regard his child as already within the pale of the Kingdom. The nursery contradicted the pulpit. The child was taught in the nursery that God was his Father, even while he was taught from the pulpit that God was the Father only of the converted.

This vacillation, this conflict between practice and doctrine, could not fail to produce an effect upon minds thus trained. It was the common feeling of the young, that their place within Christ's Church was an ambiguous, if not a usurped one. They never knew how to work, and they never knew how to worship. The *strength* of *confidence* was denied them. Whether they were accepted, or could only hope to be so—whether they were Christians, when they felt that they were not converts—were questions which

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they fruitlessly pondered, and were left to themselves to decide.

It was scarcely wonderful that to minds in this state of suspense a new doctrine (for such it was to them) of Church membership and inherited privilege came with attractive power. Children of Evangelical Parents—sons in some instances, and daughters too, of Clergymen who had held a foremost place in the maintenance of a purely Gospel doctrine—were swept into the vortex of an excessive ritualism, and at last, too often, into the open communion of an unreformed and deeply corrupted Church. This was because they found in the one, and still more decisively in the other, an answer to the long-pondered, the agitating enquiry, Am I anything to God? May I worship Him with affiance? Can I work for Him without presumption? That question ought to have been answered earlier, answered within our Communion, answered from the Church's Catechism, answered from the open Gospels, answered most positively from the Lord's

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Prayer. You are a child of God by right of a world-wide Redemption: you are a child of God by right of an individual Baptism. Everything which God did in Christ, He did for you: everything which belongs to the sons of God, whether in Atonement or in Grace, whether through Christ's Sacrifice, or through Christ's Spirit, is yours, yours also, yours of right, because you are born into a world which Christ redeemed, because you are incorporated personally into a Church in which the Spirit dwells.

Now therefore in confidence, not in mistrust, shall be your strength. Doubt not God's act, and doubt not God's promise. You are His son, and He is your Father. *When ye pray, say, Our Father*[1]. Not by your free-will, but by His, you are admitted already into the blessed company of His people. Believe in Christ's sacrifice: believe, through it, in the forgiveness of your sins. Believe in the Holy Ghost; and claim for yourself that Divine Presence which is the blessing of all

[1] Luke xi. 2.

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who ask it. Live as a forgiven man from your youth up. Live from your youth up as one in whom the Holy Spirit has His temple. Work for God, in a calling worldly or sacred, in daily purity and in daily charity, in special acts of devotion and in the devotion of a life-long consecration; and doubt not that He, your Father, recognizes and will bless you. Kneel before Him in filial confidence, and commit to Him the keeping of life and soul as unto a faithful Creator and an all-merciful God[1]. *In confidence shall be your strength.* If you have wandered, return: if you need a radical change, seek and you shall have it: if all is wrong with you, if you are in the far country, come to yourself, retrace your steps with all humility and with all earnestness: even in the far country, remember that you are a son, and in preparing for a return say, *I will arise and go to my Father*[2]*!* These are the rights of the baptized; and whether saved yet or no, at least you are redeemed.

Thus the very Church itself, in which we

[1] 1 Pet. iv. 19. [2] Luke xv. 18.

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worship, with its proper appurtenances of sacred Font and holy Table, shall be to young and old the sign and sacrament of a fundamental truth. It shall say to us, The redemption is world-wide. It shall say to us, God seals in Baptism upon each one the blessings of that Redemption which He has wrought for all; God prepares a table in the wilderness[1] for the perpetual refreshment and quickening of all whom He has thus taken to Himself to be His people. That Font, that Table, shall reprove all mistrust, and inspire all confidence. It shall not teach us—God forbid—to rely upon a sacrament for salvation: it shall not say, You have Abraham to your father[2], and therefore it matters not how you live, you must be accepted: but it shall say, Mistrust not God's will that you should be saved: wait not for a new sign: tarry not for changes within, or interventions from without: start at once, start without fear, in the work of worship and in the work of obedience: waste not precious

[1] Psalm lxxviii. 19. [2] Matt. iii. 9.

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time in asking who called or who sent you, but be assured of that love which *prevented* you with blessing[1], that love which shall further and crown with grace. *In confidence shall be your strength.*

In the firm maintenance of this principle lies the vigour, the consistency, and the peace of a Church. Every man who has once entered it through the appointed door of Christ's Baptism, shall remain in it until he abjures it by apostasy or is expelled from it by an actual or a virtual excommunication. And if in any age Church censures, in the form of penal inflictions, shall have worn out or become impossible; if, consequently, many an unworthy son contaminates the home, a Demas loving the world, a Diotrephes coveting preeminence, or a Simon buying the Holy Ghost with money[2], still the Church shall suffer it; shall not attempt in this world, by any unauthorized or private judgments, to sever tares from wheat in the growing corn-

[1] Psalm xxi. 3.

[2] Acts viii. 20. 2 Tim. iv. 10. 3 John 9.

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field, or bad from good in the contents of the still outspread net[1]. Still, like Apostles of old, she shall take men on their profession, treat as true those who so pronounce themselves, and not hanker after that gift of discerning spirits which God in wisdom (we doubt not) has seen fit to withdraw from the earth. Whosoever lives, admitted and unexpelled, shall worship with the Church: and whosoever dies in this state shall be buried with the Church's burial. She will not pare down, to suit such cases, the words of personal hope in which she consigns to their original earth the bodies of the departed. What a Christian hopes shall be hoped for them: if they belie the hope, theirs the blame. The Church can no more have a Funeral than she can have a Liturgy for the wicked. The worship of the Church in life, the thanksgiving of the Church in death, must be framed on a supposition of sincerity. *In confidence shall be your strength.*

We have touched upon many grave to-

[1] Matt. xiii. 29, 47.

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pics: but far above all applications stand the words themselves, which have formed our text. Let your religion be one of *quietness:* let your religion be one of *confidence.* Calm, lest it be the creature of circumstance: trustful, lest it be the sport of doubt. Let it look well to its foundation, with a view to the coming flood: let it look well to its anchor, in preparation for the approaching storm. A soul trusting God's faithfulness, and a soul personally dealing with God Himself; a soul that believes because God has spoken, and a soul that has intercourse with God who lives; is safe in life and in death, safe for time, and safe for eternity. The house of that hope falls not, for it is founded upon a rock[1]. *In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.*

[1] Matt. vii. 25.

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DISCOURSE II.

REGENERATION.

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REGENERATION.

1 PETER I. 23.

Being born again.

THERE is one subject, which has caused much perplexity to the serious, and given a great handle to the scoffer: it is the term now to be examined; the word *Regeneration.*

The word itself occurs but twice in the Scriptures. But kindred expressions are found there, which must be taken into account along with it, if we would comprehend the subject.

Regeneration is a metaphor. And like other metaphors it is capable of more than one application.

Strange as it may seem, in this one brief

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and obvious remark is contained the key to all the difficulties of the subject, and the correction of its chief perversions.

Regeneration is a metaphor. It expresses by a strong figure a great change; a change so great that it may be compared to that which an infant undergoes when it is born, when it is brought out of darkness and silence and inactivity into a world of light and sound and energy.

Any change important enough to bear the stress of such a comparison, any change that is from evil and towards good, any change by which a living being is transferred from a condition of disadvantage or suffering into one of benefit and of happiness, may be designated by the title of Regeneration.

The writers of the ancient world were not unacquainted with the term before us. When the great Roman orator alludes, in a private letter, to his recent restoration from exile to the comforts and interests of his social and political life at Rome, he calls that restoration his παλιγγενεσία, his regeneration. And when

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this same expression was adopted by our Lord and His Apostles into the vocabulary of the Christian Faith, did it therefore cease to be a metaphor? Or did it become so restricted in its possible or legitimate uses as to have henceforth but one definite meaning, but one single idea to which it could be applied without error, or but one shade and degree of that idea to which henceforth it must be rigidly tied down? Such has been too often the tacit assumption: and out of that assumption has arisen an interminable war of words, in which if there may have been something of real and essential difference between the combatants, there has been far more of misunderstanding and mistake, which would have been instantly cleared away, in many instances, by the repetition of the few words already employed, *Regeneration is a metaphor, and, as such, is capable of many applications.* One may have applied that metaphor, and another may have refused it, to Christian Baptism: and yet he who applied and he who denied it may have meant all the time,

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if not precisely the same thing, yet at least two things so slightly differing from each other as to be reducible, by mutual explanation and by tranquil consultation, to a harmony sufficient for practical purposes and highly serviceable to the common interests (for they are never really at variance) of charity and of truth.

I will refer to two or three passages of Scripture, by way of illustration of the remark just made. We will notice first the two places (there are but two) in which the substantive rendered *Regeneration* is found in the volume of the New Testament.

St Peter, having just witnessed the departure of the young man who could not be persuaded to give up his riches for Christ, said to our Lord, in a spirit not perhaps wholly free from self-congratulation and self-confidence, *Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee;* we have made the sacrifice which the rich young man found to be impossible; *what shall we have therefore*[1]*?* what

[1] Matt. xix. 27.

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shall be our reward? *And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*[1].

The regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory. Here therefore the term is applied, neither to Baptism, nor to conversion; to nothing past, or capable of becoming so in this life; but to a totally different subject, that great renovation and reconstitution of the whole of man's being, which shall accompany the second coming of Christ, when the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and God, as never before, shall dwell with us and in us for ever. The Regeneration here spoken of is that glorious change which is described elsewhere by St Peter, as *the times of restitution of all things*, as *the times of refreshing* which are to *come from the the presence of the Lord*[2]; by St Paul, as *a deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the*

[1] Matt. xix. 27, 28. [2] Acts iii. 19, 21.

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glorious liberty of the children of God, for which he says that the whole creation, not the Christian Church only, is, consciously or unconsciously, yet with infallible signs of anxious desire, waiting and watching[1]; by St John, as the result of the word of Him that sat upon the throne, *Behold, I make all things new...Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away*[2].

We must never forget that the first application in Scripture of the word Regeneration is to this great and momentous change which is as yet all future. That remembrance will be enough, of itself, to prevent our ever narrowing the sense of Regeneration to any one definite and exclusive application.

The word itself is found but once again in

[1] Rom. viii. 19—23. [2] Rev. xxi. 3—5.

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Scripture, in the Epistle of St Paul to Titus. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*[1]. The word translated *washing* should unquestionably be rendered by the term *laver*. *By the laver* (or *bath*) *of regeneration.* Nor can there be much doubt that the reference of the expression there is to the ordinance of Baptism. As our Lord said, *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*[2], so St Paul, expanding His words, says, God saved us by these two things; the laver of regeneration which is Baptism, and the inward renewing of the Holy Ghost. According to the parallel passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, *Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*[3]. According, once more, to the saying of St Peter, *Baptism doth also now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,* not the mere outward rite, the

[1] Tit. iii. 5. [2] Mark xvi. 16.
[3] Heb. x. 22.

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sprinkling with water, *but the answer* (or *interrogation*) *of a good conscience toward God*[1]; the question, *Dost thou believe in the Son of God?* addressed in Baptism to one who can answer it from the soul; the profession of faith accompanying the outward rite, and springing out of the convictions of a changed heart.

So widely different are the two applications in Scripture itself of a term which controversialists assume to be incapable of more than one.

It will be desirable to add yet two other illustrations of the meaning of Regeneration in Scripture, though the uses of the very word itself are already exhausted.

In the opening of the first Epistle of St Peter we have this expression: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again* (or rather, *begat us again, regenerated us*) *unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*[2]. Here the Resurrection

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 21. [2] 1 Pet. i. 3.

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of Christ is described as the Regeneration of Christians to a living hope. No individual feelings, and no individual change, are here brought into view: but Christians are said to have been once for all regenerated by the actual Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. That event was the reproduction, as into a new life, of all who shall be interested in it. As the Regeneration spoken of in St Matthew is all future, so the Regeneration spoken of by St Peter is all past. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ was the Regeneration of the whole Church. It is in virtue of that one event, that all that we have and all that we hope for from God is communicated to us. The event itself was our Regeneration. What can more clearly express to us the freedom of the Scripture phraseology in its application even of this one term?

But the subject can in no sense be completed without a distinct, though it be a brief, reference to that great discourse of our Lord with Nicodemus, which alone brings fully into view the most important part of

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the truth involved in it. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born* (or *begotten*) *again* (or *from above*), *he cannot see the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit*[1].

He who came to our Lord as Nicodemus did, by night indeed as though ashamed of being seen to come, yet with an evident desire to learn of Him, must first be taught how deep a work is needed to make a man a Christian; no less a work than that of Regeneration itself, of being introduced, as by a second birth, into a new world of thought, feeling, and action. This Regeneration is described as effected *by water and by the Spirit.* Even as elsewhere the work of Christ on the human soul is described as a Baptism *with the Holy Ghost and with fire*[2], that is, with the Holy Ghost in the character

[1] John iii. 3, 5, 6. [2] Matt. iii. 11.

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of fire, burning up corruption, and kindling the soul with a new energy of life and light; so here the same work is described as a Regeneration *with water and with the Spirit*, with the Holy Spirit in the character of cleansing and purifying water, washing the soul from its defilements, and renewing it as with a refreshing and invigorating stream. *With the Holy Ghost and with fire* is the one figure; *with water and with the Spirit* is the other. And I know not that we need see in the original address to Nicodemus anything of a more formal or ritual character. I know not that the words would convey to his mind more than this idea of an impressive and appropriate figure. If so, the expression there employed, *and* the appointed sign of water in Baptism, will become two co-ordinate testimonies, the one by word, the other by act, of the same great necessity of an inward and spiritual cleansing. Just as the memorable discourse upon the living bread from heaven[1], *and* the broken bread in the ordi-

[1] John vi. 32—58.

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nance of the Lord's Supper, express, the one in word and the other in act, the same spiritual truth, the necessity that our souls should be sustained in life by receiving into them daily by faith the very presence of their Saviour Christ.

It may be, however, that in the discourse with Nicodemus we are designed to see (though he could not see it) the twofold condition, already referred to, of a Christian's salvation; the outward ordinance and the inward grace. He who said elsewhere, *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*[1], may have intended thus early to intimate, and to leave for ever on record, that Baptism *and* the Divine Spirit are the joint requirement for admission into His kingdom. Not by the outward sign alone; for Baptism, like circumcision, to avail anything, must be *that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter*[2]: yet not without the outward sign; for that was Christ's institution, and he who despises it trifles with the command of Christ. *By*

[1] Mark xvi. 16. [2] Rom. ii. 29.

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one Spirit were we all baptized into one body[1]: neither the Baptism nor the Spirit can be dispensed with: for the two together constitute the Christian's regeneration, and what God has joined man must not sever. *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*[2].

We have thus seen the term Regeneration, or its equivalent, employed in four different modes in as many passages of the Holy Scriptures. Denoting in itself nothing more than a great and radical change, it is applied in Scripture once to the universal effect upon the Church of Christ's Resurrection, once to the universal effect upon the Church of Christ's second Advent, once to the individual effect of the ordinance of Baptism as distinguished from the renewing of the Spirit, and once to the individual effect upon the soul, either of the Holy Spirit alone in His character of the cleansing water, or else of the conjoint operation upon the soul of the

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 13. [2] Acts ii. 38.

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outward baptismal water and the inward cleansing of the Holy Ghost.

It is not to perplex still further a question already sufficiently intricate, but rather to throw the light of Christian wisdom and love upon a scene of dark and bitter conflict, that I have pointed out these varieties in the Scriptural use of the figure involved in the term Regeneration. The Christian world is divided into two parties of eager and often acrimonious disputants upon the question which they designate as that of Baptismal Regeneration. Assuming that they all mean the same thing by the term thus employed, they are at issue only upon this, whether Scripture and the Church of England represent Regeneration as invariably accompanying Baptism. And while the impugners of that doctrine are often driven into subtle and disingenuous shifts to explain away terms employed by our Church with sufficient distinctness to preclude reasonable doubt, its champions, with equally or perhaps more injurious consequences, interpret the

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Church's words in a manner which certainly that Church never intended. When the Church, on every completion of the rite of Infant Baptism, addresses the Congregation in the words, *Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate;* the one party will regard this as at best a charitable hope, destitute of all certainty, and conveying therefore no comfort and involving no practical result; and the other gives such a sense to the word *regenerate* as all must recoil from who remember that the Holy Spirit is not a thing but a Person; not a material gift which may lie dormant in a dormant soul to germinate perhaps years afterwards in a period of consciousness and awakening reason, but a living Agent exercising a mysterious but real influence upon living agents, present, as to any Scriptural use of that term, only where He is operative, felt in His comfort or visible in His fruits.

If you should ever be taught to put forced constructions upon the words of your Church's Services or Articles, refuse, steadily

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refuse, to do so. If you do not understand them, confess that: if you do not see their consistency with other Church utterances or with Scripture, suspend your judgment until the time comes when you must either declare, or refuse to declare, that you give your heart's assent to the doctrine and ritual of the Book of Common Prayer. But refuse to trifle with yourselves and with your convictions by saying that, when the Church says that a child is regenerate, she means that perhaps, by a separate act of which she knows nothing, he may be or may hereafter be regenerate; or that, when taught in her Catechism to declare yourself to be *a child of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven*, you only express your faith in a possibility that at some remote day you may become so.

On the other hand, if you are bidden to believe that a change of heart has taken place in a heart which is at present insusceptible of spiritual impressions; in a little infant which has as yet in exercise no affections, pas-

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sions, principles, or powers of judgment; refuse there also, refuse resolutely, to be imposed upon by names and forms; adhere firmly to those dictates alike of conscience and of Scripture which teach you that the Holy Spirit is a living Person, and that, like the wind to which our Lord compares His operation, though *thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth*, yet at least *thou hearest the sound thereof*[1], and judgest of its presence or absence by certain intelligible and infallible signs.

What shall we say then? Say, as our Church teaches us to say, I believe that every baptized child is regenerate; is, as the following words explain the meaning, *grafted into the body of Christ's Church.* Regeneration is a figure, and a figure capable, as we have seen in Scripture, of various applications. It may be applied wherever a real and important change takes place in a man's moral or spiritual condition. It might be applied—if there were no risk of confusion in such an

[1] John iii. 8.

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application—it might be applied with perfect propriety to that greatest of all moral and spiritual changes, by which a sinner returns from the error of his ways and finds forgiveness and rest in Christ. But it may be applied with perfect propriety also—and it is thus that we apply it in the Service for Infant Baptism—to that change by which a new-born infant is taken out of the world of nature and transferred by an ordinance of Christ's appointment into the world of grace; that change by which the promises made generally to mankind are sealed personally upon him; by which God in Christ takes him, as it were, aside by himself and sets His mark upon him, promising to do for him all that he needs to keep and to save him, promising to be his Father and to own him as His son.

Is this a change too trifling to be designated by a term so emphatic? Little do we know of our own privileges, little do we honour as we ought God's greatest gifts to us, to little purpose have we studied the

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records either of heathen experience or of Christian Revelation, if we allow ourselves thus to judge. Is it nothing to be the subjects of an ordinance instituted by Christ Himself and preserved to us by a Providence eloquent of Divine love? that we have not been left even with a Bible only, to make out what we could of God's purposes towards us and dealings with us, to frame for ourselves our conceptions of Him and to settle for ourselves the relation in which we will place ourselves towards Him, but have been, as it were, *prevented with the blessings of goodness*[1]; brought, when we were yet unconscious, within the fold of Christ's Church; shielded and nurtured there during years of incapacity and inexperience; taught, as we were able to bear it, what it most concerned us to know; preoccupied in mind and heart for Christ; above all, so placed and so circumstanced that we might be told with truth and with confidence from the earliest dawn of reason, that we were already the children of God—

[1] Psalm xxi. 3.

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made so by Him; already members of Christ—made so by Him; already inheritors, by right and title, of the very kingdom of Heaven? Place yourselves, but for one moment, in imagination, out of the pale of these blessings; imagine yourselves destitute up to this time of the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of Heaven; left to grope your way amongst natural instincts, guesses, and sentiments; left to find out God by searching for Him, or rather to live utterly without Him in the world; and then surely, if you compare this condition with that which is yours, with what you are *at the worst*, you will see that indeed the figure is no exaggeration; that, in comparison with heathenism, it is no fiction to speak of Christianity itself as Regeneration; that, much as may yet have to be wrought in you before you can enter into the kingdom; great as may be your need of increased faith and hope and love; nay, if even you need that second Regeneration which is the conversion of the baptized sinner to his God; still it is something, something

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which prophets and righteous men of old would have sold all they had to purchase, to have been once brought within the pale of the covenant, when, in days of earliest childhood, Christ, as it is written, called you to Himself, *took you up in His arms, put His hands upon you, and blessed you*[1].

[1] Mark x. 16.

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DISCOURSE III.

CONFESSION.

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CONFESSION.

JOSHUA VII. 19.

My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

ISRAEL was come out of Egypt, had ended his desert-sojourn, had crossed the Jordan, had taken Jericho. Thus far well. How is it that a comparatively insignificant enterprise now baffles him? that Ai, a city represented as not requiring all his strength, proves now more than a match for him? The answer is found in the history here open.

A stern charge had been laid upon the invading army, not to touch the spoil of Jericho[1]. One part of the spoil was to be

[1] Joshua vi. 18, 19, 24.

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brought into the treasury: the rest was to be burnt with fire. A nation which had been *taken from the midst of another nation*[1] by a strong hand not its own, and which now was to be brought into the inheritance of another nation by the outstretched arm of God, must be reminded, at the very outset, of its dependence and of its responsibility: there must be no forgetfulness of the source of its strength, of the condition of its success, of the high purposes of its mission: there must be no selfish grasping, and no mean lust of getting, to interfere with the grandeur and the sanctity of its election: on this first occasion of all, a lesson was to be taught for all time, as to the awfulness of privilege; as to the dreadful consequences of being brought very near to God, as His Church and His people, and forgetting or trifling with Him; as to the inseparable connection between knowledge and duty, between light and accountability, between trust and reckoning.

But there was one man who determined

[1] Deut. iv. 34.

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to risk all consequences. To us, reading of his crime in the Bible, with that half-unrealizing and half-exaggerating spirit which we commonly bring to its study, the offence may seem great and heinous: to him, probably, as is the case with all sinners at the moment of sinning, it looked small enough: what was it, he might ask, but just rescuing from a wanton wilful waste one little fragment of a conquered city's treasure? who would be the poorer for his subtraction of this goodly Babylonish garment, these few shekels of silver, this paltry wedge of gold? and as for the edict of prohibition, O surely among the many thousands of Israel he shall pass unnoticed; unobserved of man, perhaps overlooked by God!

And so he risks it. Hear his own account of the steps of his transgression. How exactly are they the steps of all transgression, from the earliest sin of all even to our own! *I saw...I coveted...I took them...and, behold, they are hid*[1]*! Every man is tempted, when he*

[1] Joshua vii. 21.

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is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed: then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth—first disguise, concealment, falsehood—the thing taken must be hidden—covered up by evasion, by denial, by hypocrisy—at last, all the same, it *bringeth forth death*[1].

See how it was with Achan.

All seemed calm enough with him. There was no change in the face of the earth or of the sky: the guilty secret was safe: the stolen treasure was hidden in the earth beneath his tent: he himself laid him down and slept and rose up again: he buckled on his armour as aforetime, and went forth unchallenged among the most innocent and the most unsuspected of his countrymen. Did his heart at all misgive him, when he saw that unexpected sight—the three thousand warriors of Israel turning their backs before the men of Ai? *The hearts of the people*, says the sacred record, *melted, and became as water*[2]: not, perhaps, at all more than others, the

[1] James i. 14, 15. [2] Joshua vii. 5.

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heart of the sinner! What was there to connect his particular act with the misfortune of his countrymen? O, the secret was safe: surely there was no treachery: there had been no eye upon him in the privacy of his tent: all may be well yet!

Perhaps he too, among the elders of Israel, may have even rent his clothes, and fallen in solemn supplication before the ark of the Lord, expostulating with the unseen Ruler concerning the calamity which He had brought upon Israel[1]. Even this goes not beyond our experience of *the deceitfulness of sin*[2].

But now comes the answer: and with it the beginning of the end.

Israel had sinned; transgressed God's covenant; *taken of the accursed thing; stolen, and dissembled also, and put it even among their own stuff.* Therefore they were weak: therefore they had turned their backs in the fight: there was an accursed thing in the midst of them, and till that is put away,

[1] Joshua vii. 6—9. [2] Heb. iii. 13.

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they cannot stand before their enemies. Israel must pass in awful procession before God's presence: the lot, which is of His disposing, must fall upon tribe and family and household and man: and the man whom God thus detects shall perish for the folly which he has wrought in Israel[1].

Morning dawns, that terrible morning, upon the expectant host: Joshua rises early, and brings Israel, first of all, by its tribes. What were the thoughts of the sinner as he sees the lot fall, and his own tribe, Judah, is the one taken? Can he hope for impunity now? The families, the subdivisions of the tribe, pass next in review: again the lot falls, and again it is his, it is the family of Zerah, which is taken. Still there is a chance for him: the all-seeing Eye may yet be baffled:—or it may not be his crime which is in question: let us play the game out—we may win yet!

The family of the Zarhites comes, and Zabdi is taken: nearer and nearer yet, shines

[1] Joshua vii. 11—15.

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the light which shall make manifest: Zabdi comes, and his household: the household, man by man: and at last Achan, the son of Carmi—yes, the pedigree is written in full—Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, is taken[1].

There then he stands, in the sight of all Israel, the man whose sin has found him out. By slower and less direct processes the thing happens every day. We see it in our courts of justice. Stone by stone, and tier by tier, the fabric of proof rises: one witness has seen this, and another has seen that, and a third furnishes the connecting link which ties the two together: and so at last, after a long day of questioning and cross-questioning, the judge has summed up, and the fatal *Guilty* is the verdict. Lust, long weeks ago, brought forth sin; and now the sin finished shall bring forth death. These are human processes. But God saw the thing in itself; marked in its first rising the bad desire; saw in plan and

[1] Joshua vii. 16—18.

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purpose, saw then in execution, the deed of wrong; and could, if He saw fit, bring it to light by the lot or by the thunderbolt. If He does not this, it is not for lack of insight, nor for lack of power; not because He thinks less now of sin, and not because He has withdrawn Himself further from the earth; but because He is longsuffering to usward, and because He works by means as sure if less speedy.

But now see what follows.

The words of the text come in here; after detection, after conviction.

And this is our subject.

Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

There is a strong feeling that a condemned criminal should confess. Not that the confession is wanted to justify the sentence: that rests upon proof, and needs not the avowal of the sinner. But we all feel it dreadful that a man should go into God's

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presence with a lie in his right hand. If he have been false all his life, let him at least be true in his death.

But we must widen our view a little, if we would draw from the subject its real lesson. We are not speaking to-night of convicted murderers, of condemned cells. We are speaking of that which concerns all of us—yes, in various degrees, all of us—for where is the man who has not sinned?

The word Confession is on many lips. From time to time it obtains a wide celebrity through some story or some correspondence in which the Romish or semi-Romish confessional is mixed up: and at such times, in the sweeping judgments of men, there is a risk of the true and real thing suffering by reason of the untrue and the unreal perversion of it; so that the voice of reason, and the voice of Scripture too, shall be unheard or even silenced on a topic of the most vital importance to the life and to the soul.

Let us look into the matter seriously.

Confession has two aspects. An aspect

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towards God; an aspect also towards man. The text tells us so. *Make confession,* Joshua says, *unto Him*—that is, to God—*and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it nat from me.* He calls upon Achan for a twofold acknowledgment: or rather, for one acknowledgment under two aspects; towards God, and towards man.

1. Now I suppose that no one pretends to set aside the duty of confession to *God.* It is one of the chief grounds on which a Protestant rests his objection to the Romish system of the confessional, that it seems to substitute the confession of sins to man for the acknowledged duty of confessing them to God.

And yet I believe that it is never superfluous to enforce even this obvious duty.

Confession is of two kinds; general, and particular.

That which we use in the Congregation is of necessity general.

And this not only because it is used by all; which is probably the meaning of the

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expression in our Rubric, *A general Confession, to be said of the whole Congregation after the Minister, all kneeling;* but also because, being used by all, it cannot enter into the particulars of individual sin: it can only express, in strong terms, and in broad lines of description, that which is the true character of all hearts and lives, when the light of God's presence and of God's holiness is thrown upon them. *We have erred and strayed... We have followed our own devices... We have offended... We have left undone the right... We have done the wrong ... There is no health in us.* This is an instance of general confession.

Now confession of this kind is not to be despised. Though general, it is not necessarily vague. I know that it may be made vague by any of us. But where there is a serious desire to take a true view of our condition as fallen creatures, and as actually sinful and sinning creatures, in the sight of a pure and holy God, there is great force and great benefit in this outpouring of a general self-lamentation in the all-hearing

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ear: there is something deeply real in this plunging of the universal being into the *fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*[1], this gathering of the whole experience, as the course of life has brought it to us, into one sweeping act of self-condemnation and self-renunciation, constraining us to throw ourselves absolutely and without exception upon the mere mercy and compassion of a pitying, a longsuffering, and a redeeming God. Let no man despise it.

But then this general confession must be made real, and kept real, by that which is minute, individual, particular.

Even in the Congregation, under the veil of this general language, there is time and place for something with which no stranger can intermeddle. These hearts which are unfolding themselves at the mercy-seat of God, do not lose their individuality by the presence of other hearts around them. Even the general confession is the sum of a thousand particular confessions, and then only rises

[1] Zech. xiii. 1.

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with full meaning into the ear of God when it is prompted by the personal experiences of a multitude of persons, each one of whom is grieved and wearied by the burden of his own separate sins.

But the confession of which we now speak must be chiefly made in secret. The public confession may be the result of the private; may even cover, may even convey, the private: but it requires that, it presupposes that, to make it real and to make it significant.

Now we can imagine some person asking this question: What can be the necessity for particular confession, if God knows all before I speak? Why should it be important for me to go back into the recesses of memory, and draw thence the special deeds, words, and thoughts, by which I have provoked God's displeasure, when, if He be God, He knows all better than I, and cannot need my words?

Such thoughts cause many men to deal only in vague generalities even in private devotion. As they argue concerning past

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sins, so they argue concerning duties to be done and temptations to be encountered. God knows all: why should I so speak, in my prayers, as though I were informing Him? Enough if I pray, in the most general terms, for pardon and grace, presupposing His knowledge alike of the past and of the future, and just asking Him to do for me what He sees to be necessary as to each and both.

God Himself says by the Prophet Ezekiel, after giving some exceeding great and precious promises, *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them*[1]. Promise does not preclude prayer; neither does Omniscience make it needless for the finite to spread its wants in detail before the Infinite. Especially is this needful in the case of Confession. A general sense of sinfulness is compatible—we have all found it so—with a total self-ignorance and consequent self-complacency. It is only by going into details, that any man really sees himself to be a sinner. When he begins to say, like Achan,

[1] Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

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Thus and thus have I done; then and then only can he use with full meaning the other clause of Achan's confession, *Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel.* It is by taking fully into account the circumstances, antecedent and concomitant, of each transgression; saying, *This was my warning, this was my mercy, this was my light, this was my opportunity; and yet, just thus and thus, I set each aside, and went by this path to this end;* it is thus that we arrive at a distinct conviction of sin, wholly different from that blurred and confused image of it which makes up the general idea, *I am a sinner.* We need this kind of retrospect, to fix in our minds the just impression of our culpability. We need this kind of retrospect, to fix upon our minds the due warning of danger in the future. It is thus that we become mindful of the insidious advances of the tempter, and become forearmed because forewarned. It is thus, above all, that we learn, as the text bids us, to make confession itself minister to God's glory; even by acknowledging how He has

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dealt with us and we with Him—the one how merciful, the other how ungrateful!

It is wonderful how blind we all are to our own special infirmities. Few men probably confess their own faults, their own peculiar, their own besetting sins. They confess something; something which is true, something which is a part of the truth; but seldom the chief thing, the real thing, the crying sin, the deepest innermost root of evil. Not only because it is so natural to keep back the thing which we do not mean to part with; to hide in the tent the wedge of gold or the Babylonish garment which is our own special idol: not only because there is an obliquity in so many, which would serve God by halves, and keep back from His observation the thing which in reality is dividing or engrossing the heart: but also because this true introspection is so difficult; needs such an eagle eye to perform it accurately; and is so easily diverted from the primary to the secondary, from the idol of the heart to the image of the fancy. Nothing but long prac-

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tice, watchful self-discipline, earnest study of God's Word, and diligent communing with God Himself, will enable us truly to confess, even to Him, the true evil, or turn our conflict with sin to good account by knowing with whom and on what field that warfare must be waged. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*[1].

2. But there is such a thing also as confession to man. Joshua says, not only, *Make confession to God*, but also, *And tell me now what thou hast done.* And St James says, *Confess your faults one to another*[2]. It is not Scriptural then, it is not Christian teaching, which discards or denounces altogether the duty of a human confession.

Few would deny that there are cases in which without confession, confession to man, there can be no repentance. Cases in which an injury has been done, or an unkindness shown, to a neighbour or a brother, which

[1] Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24. [2] James v. 16.

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absolutely demand the only reparation which is now possible, the reparation of a frank and regretful acknowledgment. Difficult as it may be, the effort is necessary, is a condition of forgiveness, is a criterion of repentance.

On the other hand, we will venture to say that neither Scripture, nor our Church's teaching, gives the slightest encouragement to that sort of systematic and habitual confession, the periodical carrying to a priest of the secrets of the conscience and of the life, which had its natural place amongst the many errors of Romanism, and which some would bring back in these days into the bosom of a Reformed and Protestant Church.

Great, no doubt, would be the relief, to some minds, of the practice of this Auricular Confession. To be able to throw off upon another the difficulties and the uncertainties of the spiritual being; to be allowed to repose upon another's judgment as to the thoughts they shall think and the road they shall travel; to feel, when the painful confession is once got through, that the burden is

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rolled off and the wound healed and the breach repaired, so that now they may start afresh, with entire absolution for the past and express direction for the future; this, to some minds, would be exquisitely delightful, reconciling them to the pain of the most distressing confidences, and to the shame of the most humiliating self-exposures.

But is it thus that God has provided in His Gospel for the great journey of human life? Has it pleased Him thus to set one man in charge of thousands, with the key of grace in his hand, and the balm of health in his keeping?

There are two cases, two only, in which this Church of England has bidden her ministers to ask for the intimate confidences of her children. One of these is in reference to the Sacrament of Holy Communion. If there be any one, perplexed and distressed as to his fitness on some particular occasion to communicate; some one who, after taking all possible counsel with himself, *cannot quiet his own conscience therein;* afraid to come, because of his unworthiness, and yet unwilling to

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absent himself from that which he knows to be the ordinance of Christ; let him, our Church says, come to his Minister for advice; let him open his grief, ask comfort and counsel, seek guidance in his perplexity, and avoid the misery of scruple and doubtfulness.

The other is in reference to great sickness. If a man, lying on what may probably be his deathbed, *feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter*, he is moved to make a special confession of the sins which press upon him. It is the call of humanity as much as of religion. At such a moment, in the near prospect of eternity, it is well that a man should have his conscience clean and disburdened: let him confide his trouble to the minister of Christ, assured of his sympathy, hopeful of his experience and of his discretion.

But the very exceptions prove the rule. The Church which in these two special cases advises and encourages, by her silence in other cases seems rather to dissuade.

In fact, the dangers of perpetual confession are greater than its benefits.

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A constant application for advice and comfort, to one who, whatever be his office, is a man still, has in it some perils arising out of human frailty on the side of the counsellor, and even more, if it be possible, on the side of the applicant himself. This walking under human guidance is a poor imperfect Christianity. It was not this to which Christ called us. It was not for this that He gave His Holy Spirit to abide for ever with His redeemed. Rather would He have us, in common times, go straight and only to Himself; ask His help in earnest prayer; read His Word till it grows as it were into us; seek His Spirit with confiding, with patient, with minute and personal supplication; and then go forth to our work and to our labour, not without many mistakes (it may be) both of opinion and practice, yet still not as children but as grown men, responsible to One only, leaning upon One only, *bought with a price*, and refusing therefore to be *servants of men*[1]. *Be not ye called Rabbi*, He said even

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 23.

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to His Apostles, *for One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren*[1]. If in certain emergencies you want the support of human counsel; if, for example, you have fallen into a snare, and are *overtaken in a fault*[2] or sin; if conscience cries aloud for confession, not to God only, but (in the extremity of the distress) to man also; then look around you for your best and wisest: it may be, God grant it may often be, that that chosen friend is your minister; but remember, it is no prerogative of his at common times to be your confessor: if you confide to him your secret, you lay upon him a heavy burden: it may be, in the case of the young it will often be, that a parent, an elder brother, an elder sister, is a far better and more suitable counsellor: whoever it is, it is not as a spiritual authority, but as a wise and kind friend, that you turn to him: you are to choose, for yours is the want, and yours the gain or the loss. There is such a thing as human confession: many is the aching heart that has been soothed by

[1] Matt. xxiii. 8. [2] Gal. vi. 1.

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it and healed: but no human confession can ever be a substitute for the Divine; and there is a danger, be not ignorant of it, lest you should try to make it so.

Finally, and in one word, mark the singular combination here presented to us. *Give glory to God, and make confession.* To confess is to give God the glory. To make confession is to do homage to the Omniscience of God; to renounce solemnly the sinner's vain confidence, *The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it*[1]*!* To make confession is to say, *Surely Thou hast seen it*[2]. To make confession is to declare myself to be what God says I am, a sinner, deserving only in myself condemnation and wrath. *Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight, that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest*[3]. To make confession is to throw myself upon God's mercy, and to declare myself a believer in it. I confess

[1] Psalm xciv. 7. [2] Psalm x. 15.
[3] Psalm li. 4.

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because I know that He is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. While I hold my peace before Him, I treat Him as a hard and cruel taskmaster, watching for my fall, obdurate towards my sorrow. When I make confession, I treat Him as the Saviour of sinners, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; given once for the world's sins, raised again for us, for us exalted, to be the Life of all who believe, and the Resurrection of the dead.

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DISCOURSE IV.

ABSOLUTION.

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ABSOLUTION.

MARK II. 5.

Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

THE subject of Absolution, or release from committed sins, is at all times the most solemn and anxious question that can occupy an immortal soul. It is generally the one question which occupies that soul's latest energies when it is quitting earth and anticipating eternity. In that day, however severe the bodily conflict, there is generally found time also and strength for this one enquiry, Who can forgive my sins?

On a subject thus important, and which will one day be seen to be so by all, it is well

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that the mind should be thoroughly and early informed, that it may at least be able to suggest the right answer when eternal life or death may be felt to hang upon it.

Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? was the question of the Scribes in the Gospel History: *who can forgive sins but God only*[1]*?* And it was a true and just question, though it came from scoffing lips. On the supposition that Christ was a mere man, it would have been blasphemy, that is, the assumption by a creature of the Creator's properties, to say, as He had said, to the sick man before Him, *Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.* It was not the inference, but the supposition, which was wrong; not the conclusion, but the premises: if Christ was a mere man, it would have been blasphemy to claim the power of forgiving sins.

Now, although every one who calls himself a Christian would shrink with horror from ascribing to any created being the independent right to forgive sins, yet we all know

[1] Mark ii. 7.

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that, in some professedly Christian communities, and by some persons even in our own, a derived right of that nature has been both claimed and granted: the power of Absolution has been held to reside in a Christian Priesthood, with many inferences which, if true, are full of importance, and, if untrue, must greatly endanger the spiritual state of those who rely upon them.

It is in no controversial spirit that I approach this subject. It is obviously a matter of the greatest practical importance. It lies at the root of our whole conception of the Gospel. It is one which must present itself, sooner or later, to every thoughtful mind. And it is one which is so intertwined with some portions both of the Scriptures and of the formularies of our Church, that a few words may not unfitly be devoted to it before we turn to that more positive side of the truth of which no one can dispute the vital importance.

Is the power of forgiving sins, in the name and by the authority of Christ, com-

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mitted to any human mind or voice? Did Jesus Christ commit to His first Apostles, or to any who should come after them in the ministerial office, the power to absolve men from their sins or to refuse to do so?

There are two passages in the Gospels which have been so understood. The former of these is that well-known verse in which our Lord, addressing the Apostle Peter, says, *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*[1].

It has been taken for granted that the keys here spoken of are, if I might so express it, the keys of the outer gate of the kingdom of heaven, those by which admission into the heavenly kingdom is given to men; and consequently that the gift of these keys to the Apostle implied the power to admit men into or to exclude them from the blessings of forgiveness and salvation, according to the

[1] Matt. xvi. 19.

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dictates of an infallible insight into their spiritual condition, motives and character. According to this interpretation, the power spoken of was exercised by St Peter, on the one hand when he admitted the three thousand souls into the Christian Church on the day of Pentecost[1], or subsequently the first Gentile converts in the house of the centurion Cornelius[2]; and on the other when he detected the fraud and sealed the destiny of the hypocritical Ananias[3]. In the one case he used the keys of the kingdom to admit, in the other to exclude.

But how instantly is the whole of this fabric overthrown by a reference to the Scriptural use, in other places, of the figure of the keys of the kingdom! The origin of it is clearly seen in a remarkable paragraph of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. The immediate subject of that passage is the deposition of a treasurer in the household of a king of Judah, and the substitution of another in his place. *Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto*

[1] Acts ii. 41. [2] Acts x. 48. [3] Acts v. 1—10.

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Shebna, which is over the house, and say... Behold, the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity...and I will drive thee from thy station...And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah...and I will commit thy government into his hand...and the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open[1]. This passage is employed in the Revelation of St John to furnish one of the descriptions of our Lord Himself in His relation to the Churches. *These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth*[2]; He, in other words, who is the supreme Treasurer of God's household, and whose authority is absolute to issue or to withhold its stores.

Thus the keys of the kingdom of heaven committed to St Peter become not the keys of the gate of entrance, but the keys of the

[1] Isaiah xxii. 15—22. [2] Rev. iii. 7.

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several chambers in which its stores are deposited. The office is the very same with that designated by St Paul as belonging to all the Apostles. *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries,* the secrets, the communicated secrets, the revealed secrets, *of God*[1]. It is the office described by our Lord Himself to the same Apostle St Peter, when He said, *Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over His household, to give them their portion of meat in due season*[2]*?* It is the same figure substantially with that which is employed on the same subject in St Matthew's Gospel, *Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old*[3]. And thus, *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,* is, in other words, *I will make thee a steward of my treasures, that thou mayest dispense them*

[1] 1 Cor. iv. 1. [2] Luke xii. 42. [3] Matt. xiii. 52.

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to others, in the exercise of a judgment enlightened from above as to the nature of those treasures and the wants of those to whom they are to be conveyed.

Again, the authority to bind and to loose, conveyed in the same verse to St Peter, has been sometimes conceived to refer to the retention or remission of sins; to the setting men loose from, or retaining upon them, the guilt of their past transgressions. How strange a perversion of the simple meaning of the original! To bind and to loose are, in Jewish language, to forbid and to permit. The promise that what the Apostle bound or loosed on earth should be bound or loosed in Heaven, is the promise that what they forbade as contrary to their Master's will, should be forbidden with the authority of God, and what they permitted or sanctioned as according to their Master's will, should be permitted or sanctioned with the authority of God. It constituted the Apostles infallible interpreters of the mind and will of Christ. Whatever they said or wrote, in special cases or in

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general, should carry with it the decisive authority of Christ and of God.

There is one other passage, and but one, which could cause any difficulty in connection with this subject. We read in one of the closing chapters of St John's Gospel, that, on our Lord's first appearance to the assembled disciples after His resurrection, He used these remarkable words. *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained*[1].

Now whatever variety there may have been in the interpretation of these words, no one will suppose them to mean that the Apostles or any other men were to have the power of forgiving sins, or refusing forgiveness, arbitrarily, by rules of their own, or by no rules. No human being could have authority to do more than declare forgiveness, and that by God's sentence, not his own. *Whosesoever sins ye remit or retain* can only mean, *Whosesoever sins ye declare to be re-*

[1] John xx. 22, 23.

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mitted, or declare to be retained, that is, to be still upon them. And when it is added, *they are remitted,* or else, *they are retained,* this must express that God in Heaven would ratify that declaration or that denial of forgiveness which the Apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, announced upon earth.

In the case of the Apostles, the remitting or retaining of sins had two modes of exercise. It might, in their case, be individual. They had the gift, for certain purposes at least, of discerning spirits. They were enabled, that is, at least in certain cases, to judge infallibly whether a particular person was sincere or insincere. *Thy heart is not right in the sight of God—I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*[1]—such expressions, on the lips of an Apostle, were sometimes more than mere inferences from conduct: they seem to have indicated an intuition and a certainty which cannot exist without direct inspiration. Thus then the Apostles might, in such instances,

[1] Acts viii. 21, 23.

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be said to remit or retain (that is, authoritatively to declare the remission or retention of) individual sins. They might say to one, *Thy sins are forgiven*, and to another, *Thou art yet in thy sins;* and God above, in either case, would confirm and ratify their sentence.

But far more often, even in the case of the Apostles, the remitting or retaining of sins was general. They declared to their hearers the remission of sins on the conditions of repentance and faith, the retention of sins in the absence of this mind. Without exercising an individual insight which would have been commonly unprofitable or injurious, they proclaimed the terms of forgiveness, and urged men to fulfil them. Thus, as in the other passage it was promised to them that whatever they bound or loosed (that is, forbade or sanctioned) should be ratified in Heaven; so here, with reference to a particular subject, the most important of all, it is promised that the Holy Spirit should so guide them into all truth that they should be able to declare with infallible certainty whose

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sins should be forgiven and whose retained, and by what marks the presence or the absence of forgiveness might be discerned by the individual soul.

It is doubtless in this latter sense, the general declaration, rather than the individual appropriation, of the Divine promise of forgiveness, that these words are still used in our Service for the Ordination of Priests. *Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.* That insight into souls which was possessed by Apostles is denied to us: but the commission which makes us ministers of the Church of Christ in this land authorizes us to declare the remission or retention of sins, with an authority which Christ in Heaven will ratify, so long as it is regulated by His Word and exercised under the teaching of His Spirit.

And thus too it is that in various Services of our Church a form of Absolution, varying in its terms, but constant in its principle, is appointed to be read by those who are in

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possession of the full Orders of a Presbyter[1]. There are three such forms. One, used in the celebration of the Holy Communion, is precatory in its terms; differing from a prayer only in being addressed to the congregation instead of being offered, like other prayers, in their name. *Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of His great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto Him; have mercy upon you; pardon and deliver you from all your sins.* The second, familiar to all of us in the Daily Service, is authoritative but general. *Almighty God... who desireth not the death of a sinner... and hath given*

[1] It may be asked, Why not also by a Deacon? The answer is to be found in the theory of that office, as it is expressed in the Service for the Ordering of Deacons. *It appertaineth to the Office of a Deacon...to assist the Priest in Divine Service...to read Holy Scriptures and Homilies in the Church...in the absence of the Priest to baptize infants...to search for the sick...to intimate their estates, names, and places where they dwell, unto the Curate,* &c. The present exigencies of the Church have almost obliterated the distinction; but it is clearly enough marked in her intention, to account for the most solemn announcements of Divine worship being appropriated to the higher office alone.

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power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins; He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His Holy Gospel: Wherefore let us beseech Him to grant us true repentance and His Holy Spirit[1]. The third, authoritative, like the last, but also, unlike that, personal in its form, is contained in the Service for the Visitation of the Sick; where, after every sign of real penitence has been manifested—confession, restitution, forgiveness of injuries, hearty desire for God's forgiveness—the Minister is directed to apply, in that extremity, to the individual soul demanding it, the assurance of actual pardon, in terms expressly rehearsing the conditions on which alone it is given. *Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners, who truly repent and*

[1] It is not unimportant to notice that this form of Absolution is spoken of in the Rubric which follows it, as itself a Prayer. *The people shall answer here, and at the end of all other prayers,* Amen.

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believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences: and by His authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Language so definite and so positive may be open to misunderstanding or abuse; but at least we see how carefully it is guarded, and how entirely the comfort of the individual absolution is made dependent upon the individual repentance. If the repentance be insincere or shallow, the individual absolution passes back again into the general.

Such explanations of the language of the Scriptures and of the Prayer-book can never be unseasonable: partly because some of those to whom they are addressed may eventually be called to become ministers of the Word in our National Church, liable therefore to many perplexing scruples, or else some serious errors, on this very subject; and partly because, even as laymen, you will participate, I trust, throughout life in that Church's ordinances, and ought to be its in-

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telligent and earnest champions in a world of captious men ever ready to mistake and to misrepresent it. Be well assured that, in the judgment of calm and dispassionate enquirers, it is not the Church of England which is superstitious, but only some of those who use its name falsely. The Church of England knows of no Priesthood to interpose between the soul of man and God: the Church of England knows but of one Priest, and He is our great High Priest passed already through the heavens[1]. The priests of the Church of England profess no authority but that which Jesus Christ expressly committed to His Church; the authority to repeat to later generations the terms of salvation declared once for all by His Apostles and by Himself; to proclaim the tidings of a free forgiveness, and an open access for the soul of man through the blood of Jesus into the very sanctuary and presence of God[2].

[1] Heb. iv. 14.

[2] Heb. x. 19—22. The terms there applied to all Christians are evidently derived from the rites prescribed in

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Where does our Church seek forgiveness? Where does our Church place the real power of Absolution? We possess in one of the Collects—and it is but a sample of the rest—a definite exposition of doctrine upon this great subject, and an application of that doctrine to the deepest wants of man.

O Lord, we beseech Thee, absolve Thy people from their offences; that through Thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins which by our frailty we have committed: Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour[1].

Is not a Church which thus speaks, not in one place only, but in every line of its Articles and its formularies, fulfilling indeed its vocation upon earth as a *witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, not decreeing anything against*

the Law for the consecration of the Levitical priests; the washing with water, and the sprinkling with blood. And the access to which all Christians are invited is evidently that typified by the annual entrance of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle.

[1] Collect for the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.

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the same, nor enforcing anything besides the same to be believed for necessity of salvation[1]*?*

Thy people. Our Church never suffers us to forget our standing-place. We are already God's people. Made so by creation. Made so for the second time, when the first claim was sorely vitiated, by Redemption. Made so for the third time, when the second claim might have seemed somewhat too vague and general, by individual Baptism into the very body and Spirit of Christ. *For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body... and were all made to drink into one Spirit*[2]. Unthankful we may have been, careless we may have been: we may have thought scorn of His pleasant land, and given no credence unto His word[3]; but His people we are still: till death comes, we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture[4].

But His people have sinned — O how much and how often! and the chains of sin are galling, and we struggle in them, and fret

[1] Article xx.
[2] 1 Cor. xii. 13.
[3] Psalm cvi. 24.
[4] Psalm c. 3.

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against them, and weary ourselves, and find no release: *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death*[1]*? O Lord, we beseech Thee, absolve Thou Thy people from their offences.* There is strength there, in the Almighty, for any work however difficult: grace there, in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for any gift, however unspeakable: turn thither thy weary steps; direct thither thy failing eye: He will help, He will deliver thee: He desires not the death of any sinner.

Absolve Thy people from their offences. What offences? future offences? temptations which may come upon us? sins into which we may fall? No: sins already committed; sins that are past.

But are not past sins past? Are not offences, once committed, committed and done with? Why should we ask to be absolved from past sins?

We all know—we have all found for ourselves—that sins done are never done with.

[1] Rom. vii. 24.

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No sin ever perishes: the most that we can look for is that our sins should be, as the Psalmist says, *covered*[1], so that the eye of God may not rest upon them, nor the enemy fasten upon them to drag them back into judgment. But in how many more cases are they not even covered; or covered only by ourselves[2], by our own refusal to see or to acknowledge them; and then they are indeed a drag and a burden to us, drawing our eyes downwards and clogging our onward steps, forbidding us to hope because we are guilty, forbidding us to work because we are sinful. Guilt, and sin, are the two fetters of man.

Lord, absolve us. By Thy act of free forgiveness, let the fetter of guilt fall off from us. By the gift of Thy free Spirit let the fetter of sin fall off from us. The one is done; the other is promised. *The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin*[3]. *The law of the Spirit of life in Christ*

[1] Psalm xxxii. 1. [2] Prov. xxviii. 13.
[3] 1 John i. 7.

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Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death[1].

O how soon might this prayer be answered, if any soul out of this multitude were aroused to utter it heartily!

Why should there be any delay in breathing it? Shall we be fitter to use it, worthier suppliants, to-morrow, or next month, or next year, than to-day? Shall we not rather have incurred an added load of accumulated transgression?

And does God ask whether we are worthy suppliants? Does He give only to those who need nothing? Does He cleanse only the pure, does He absolve none but the free? Nay, it is the urgency of our want that qualifies us to be suppliants: it is the very weight of our burden that makes us need to be set free.

O how soon might freedom come to any one of us, if we only asked earnestly for the Absolution of God! This day, even in this night, might come the first sense of the loos-

[1] Rom. viii. 2.

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ening chain; that sense which in comparison with the full thraldom is itself lightness and liberty and life; that sense of relief which brings with it hope, and draws us powerfully onward towards the fulness of its accomplishment.

That through Thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins which by our frailty we have committed.

By our frailty. I know not that any distinction is here meant between sins of frailty and wilful sins. Rather may we feel that all sin is the outgrowth of frailty. Nor is that any excuse for sin: our frailty is in great part our own doing: our frailty, if it be let alone, will lead us into all sin; and sin, wherever it reigns, *reigns unto death*[1]. Nor yet does it *need* that we should find excuses for our sins: the blood of Christ is all-availing: if only we feel our want of it, it will not fail us in power.

Every one of the sins which by our frailty we have committed is a band, a chain, a fetter, upon our souls. It is of the nature of sin to

[1] Rom. v. 21.

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repeat itself: we cannot sin once, and cease: if we yield to sin once, the next time it comes it claims us as pledged to it: it reminds us, as it were, of a tacit promise, and it takes for granted our acquiescence. Terrible yet just recompence! The wages of sin are not all future. Sin has its earnest, as well as its wages. If its wages are death[1], its earnest is the facility of sinning.

And despair too—and its shadows cast before, in the fadings and diminutions of hope; the growing consciousness of its being improbable that we shall resist temptation, of its being more likely than not (judging from the past) that we shall sin, and sin still, and *sin yet more*[2], against God—these things are amongst *the bands of sin:* from these too we need to be delivered.

And the prospect of deliverance lies in prayer, in prayer to God through Christ. *Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour.* Every scattered element of hope is here drawn to-

[1] Rom. vi. 23. [2] Psalm lxxviii. 32.

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gether. He to whom we pray is already our Father: He for whose sake we ask is already our Lord and our Saviour.

Unless then the whole of the Gospel be a fable, or unless we know of some special term which excludes us from the compass of a free, a universal Redemption, there must be on the part of God a willingness to absolve, proportioned to the greatness of our need, proportioned to the simplicity of our faith, proportioned to the earnestness of our desire.

Let not these great and precious promises pass by us like the idle wind! A day is coming when we shall greatly want them, when with bitter unavailing tears we may bewail our disregard of them. Let the prayer for forgiveness ascend this night from all our hearts! You little know the comfort of that prayer. You have known perhaps, in days when *the heart was tender*[1], what it was to turn again to a father or a mother, saying, *I have sinned:* you have known the sweet calm that was diffused through the whole soul by

[1] 2 Kings xxii. 19.

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sorrow for having done wrong followed by the assurance of a human forgiveness: will you not believe that He who ordained every part of man's being, designed to show us by this example the blessedness of His own forgiveness, and the readiness with which it lies ever open for the soul that unfeignedly longs for it? It is one of those happinesses which require no time, no delay certainly, for their realization. He who really asks God's forgiveness through Christ may have it at once: and he who has once tasted it will certainly come for it again. *If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*[1], is the availing motive with us all for seeking Him yet again. And be well assured that whatever really draws us towards God draws us towards holiness: there is nothing in mercy favourable to sin: there is nothing in the doctrine of a perfect Absolution but the persuasive summons to a life-long sanctification.

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 3.

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DISCOURSE V.

PRAISE.

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PRAISE.

PSALM XXII. 3, 4.

But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
Our fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them.

WE do not forget the consecration of this Psalm to the special personal utterance of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Man of Sorrows[1], Himself, in bearing our griefs and making Atonement for our sins. The opening clause, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?* was made His own expostulation as He hung upon the cross bearing the heavy weight of a world's sin and a world's curse.

[1] Isaiah liii. 3.

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But that consecration neither took away the Psalm from its human author, nor prohibited its future use by human worshippers. Rather did it form a new link between the Redeemer and His redeemed: even as it is written, *Both He that sanctifieth*, our Lord Jesus Christ, *and they who are sanctified, are all of One*—His Father is their Father, and His God their God[1]—*for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying*, in a later verse of this very Psalm now before us, *I will declare Thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee*[2]. Yes, He, the Lord of the Churches, is also the Leader of the Church's worship, and the chief Psalmist of the Church's praise. He goes before in all—and we, in so far as we are accepted worshippers, we follow after.

Now therefore let us fearlessly take to ourselves the powerful topics of hope and encouragement for the depressed and desponding in worship, which lie, in their ma-

[1] John xx. 17. [2] Heb. ii. 11, 12.

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jestic simplicity, in the few lines here before us.

God seems to be silent to us. We have sought Him in the secret chamber, and there comes no answer. We have sought Him in the great congregation, and still there is no response. We are not silent, but He is silent. What shall we say to these things? By what arguments shall we reassure our failing spirit?

1. *Thou, O God, art holy.*

But is that reflection any comfort to us? When we think what we are, is it any encouragement to know that God is holy? Must we not rather feel what the Prophet felt of old in his vision in the Temple, *Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts*[1]*?*

The thought is natural, but it is only a half-truth. *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord*[2], is the first cry, but it is not the second nor the last cry, of one who is brought

[1] Isaiah vi. 5. [2] Luke v. 8.

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into near contact with the holiness of God. As he still lies before the mercy-seat, trembling at the revelation of that *light unapproachable* in which God dwells[1], there comes One to him out of *the excellent glory*[2]—One greater, and more merciful too, than the Seraph of Isaiah's vision—bringing from the altar a live coal, the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, and saying, *Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged*[3]. The holiness of God is no terror, because it is of the very essence of that holiness to communicate itself to the sinful.

It is written of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, *Such an High Priest became us*, suited our need, as poor, sinful, defiled beings—*such an High Priest*—what? One who was, like ourselves, faulty and sinful? One who could indulge human frailty by reason of a weak complicity with it? not so—One *who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and*

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 16. [2] 2 Pet. i. 17.
[3] Isaiah vi. 6, 7.

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made higher than the heavens[1]; One who, being Himself perfectly pure from all spot and stain of sin, can be relied upon for a Divine help, even as His personal experience of temptation secures our finding in Him a human sympathy.

Just such is the argument now before us.

Why hast Thou forsaken me, O my God, when *Thou*, all the time, *art holy?*

It is of the very nature of holiness to feel, to compassionate, and to help.

If God were not holy, we could not depend upon His compassion.

It is an error to think that even a man is made more merciful by having himself touched the unclean thing.

Just in proportion as a man is himself defiled, is he disqualified for sympathy and incapacitated for love. Sin is selfishness. Only the holy can love—when we understand by love what we ought to mean by it, the impulse of a spontaneous beneficence, and the permanence of a disinterested affection.

[1] Heb. vii. 26.

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We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but One who has in all points been tempted like as we are, yet without sin[1]. If our Lord Jesus Christ had but once, but in thought, yielded to temptation, He would not have become better able to feel for us, but He would have lost altogether that one characteristic of the Saviour of sinners, that His love is a pure love, and His sympathy the sympathy of the sinless.

Why hast Thou forsaken me, when *Thou*, all the time, *art holy?*

Let us learn to associate the thought of God's holiness not with ideas of distance and terror, but with feelings of affection, confidence, and brightest hope. When we draw nigh to Him, let us take with us the remembrance of His holiness: and if He seem to be silent to us, let us plead with Him for a hearing on this ground most chiefly, *I am a sinful man, and Thou, O my God, art holy!* He *must* desire to help, not though but because He is

[1] Heb. iv. 15.

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holy, and because the holy loves to make holy, to infect all who draw nigh to it with the contagion of its consecration.

2. The *character* of God is the first plea. The second plea is the *abode* of God.

Where does God dwell?

I dwell, He says, *in the high and holy place*[1]. *All the whole heavens are the Lord's: the earth hath He given to the children of men*[2]. *Our Father,* He bids us say, *which art in heaven*[3]. *God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few*[4].

No doubt these definitions are given to assist us in remembering that God is not as one of us; that He is not, as the Pantheist dreams, confused and commingled with the creature; that He is equally near to, and equally distant from, all individuals of His rational and moral creation; that we must approach Him with reverence, and conceive of Him with a godly fear.

But even the Old Testament, and much

[1] Isaiah lvii. 15.
[2] Psalm cxv. 16.
[3] Matt. vi. 9.
[4] Eccles. v. 2.

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more the New, cautions men against localizing the habitation of God.

Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee: how much less, said King Solomon, *this house that I have builded*[1]*!*

Sometimes therefore a totally different turn is given to the figure (for such it must ever be) of God's dwellingplace.

One such is found in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. *Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy*[2]. A magnificent image! Eternity is God's habitation. His temple is not here or there on earth's surface; not the sanctuary on mount Zion; not the bright sun-lit or star-spangled sky; not the mysterious inscrutable heaven beyond and above the reach of mortal vision; not the universe of space, stretching right and left into illimitable regions where the Sun of this sphere is himself shrunk into the dimensions of a single, remote, half-distinguished star: none of these things: God's temple is the boundless age: He inhabits, not

[1] 1 Kings viii. 27. [2] Isaiah lvii. 15.

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space, but time; and even time not as men measure it, by days and years, but as it exists in the aspect of the Self-existent One; century heaped upon century, millennium upon millennium; and this not in the form of vicissitude or of progression, but rather in the aspect of an everlasting Present, an unchanged, unchanging, unchangeable Today! *The high and lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity.*

And another such image is given us in dark hints of the Levitical Law, upon which the bright light of Gospel day is thrown by the Apostle Paul. *Ye,* he says, *are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them*[1]. *The temple of God is holy: which temple ye are*[2]. *Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God*[3]? Again how magnificent, how stupendous a thought! The Infinite Eternal One dwelling in man—fallen, sinful, redeemed, forgiven man—as His temple! Dwelling in the Church—

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 16. Lev. xxvi. 11, 12.
[2] 1 Cor. iii. 17. [3] 1 Cor. vi. 19.

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that is one application: dwelling in the soul—that is the other. What an idea of condescension, what an idea of elevation—what a motive for love, what a motive for reverence—what an argument for temperance, for purity, for watchfulness, for self-mastery and self-devotion! The dwelling-place of God is Man.

But the text introduces yet a third and (if possible) more remarkable use of the same figure. It speaks of God inhabiting *the praises of Israel.* And it makes this inhabitation a second plea against God's silence. As though he had said, *Why hast Thou forsaken me, seeing that Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel?*

I know that a poor prosaic gloss may be put upon the words. Commentators will tell you that God inhabits the Temple, where Israel's praises resound. And thus we shall have before us a far less noble view of God's habitation than either of the two others which have been mentioned—the temple of Eternity and the temple of Man.

Let us take rather the words. *Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel.* God's abode is

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His Church's praise. God dwells in the adorations of His people. A glorious thought, and not more glorious than profound! The Church, in one view, is God's Temple: Praise, the Church's Praise, is, in another view, God's Temple.

When the hymn swells forth from a thousand sympathetic hearts, each one severally impressed with the sense of His majesty and truth, His holiness and love, and all together telling forth these things in the hearing of men and Angels—for a witness to the world which joins not yet the chorus, and for the edification (as an Apostle teaches us) even of *the principalities and powers in heavenly places*, who thus learn *through the Church* more than they knew before of *the manifold wisdom of God*[1]—then God is there: God inhabits these praises: God deigns to possess and occupy them, to enthrone Himself (as it were) upon them, and in them to magnify Himself in the quickening and comforting and edifying of those who believe.

[1] Eph. iii. 10.

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If we had looked all through the pages of Holy Writ for a word of serious admonition to those who come together here in the character of the Church's choristers, the utterers and conductors of the Church's voice of praise, could we have found one more forcible or more august? If these *praises of Israel* are God's habitation, then you who take part in them are drawing very nigh to God: you are entering the very shrine where God's honour dwelleth[1]: I speak not now of the building; I speak of the words: I speak of your chants and anthems and hymns: and I pray you to consider how dreadful an act yours is if it be not a serious and a solemn act; an act done with great self-recollection, lowly self-humiliation, and deep awe-struck reverence.

But I would rather follow more exactly the Psalmist's guidance, and show how the thought of God's abode in Israel's praises should encourage hope. Why, he says, hast Thou forsaken me—crying to Thee in the

[1] Psalm xxvi. 8.

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day time, in the night season too not silent—seeing that Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel? It is an expostulation, founded on the remembrance of God's abode. God would not dwell in Israel's praises, if He did not approve, if He did not love them. Praise is God's habitation, because praise is God's delight. *Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein*[1]. We can appeal to Him on the ground of what He has taught us as to His acceptance of His Church's praise.

The praise of God is the very highest of all the employments in which the faculties of man can be exercised. It stands above prayer. It stands above thanksgiving. It stands above even intercession. Prayer is asking for the supply of wants. Thanksgiving is the acknowledgment of wants satisfied. Intercession is asking for the supply of others' wants. All these things therefore, even when least selfish, have their home and their bound in the present. We might say of them, as St Paul says of the gift of prophecy, and of

[1] Psalm cxxxii. 15.

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the gift of knowledge, and of the gift of tongues, *They shall fail...they shall cease...they shall vanish away*[1]. In a world where there is no want, prayer and intercession and thanksgiving will rest, being fulfilled. But praise is different from all these. Praise *never faileth.* Praise is the telling forth, not of what God has done, but of what God is. Praise is the losing myself in God. Praise is the absorption of every faculty in the thought, in the contemplation, in the investigation, in the admiration, of the fulness of grace and glory which is in God Himself. Praise is the last and best, the most difficult and the most exalted, the most self-abasing and the most self-forgetting, of all possible exercises of the human faculties in the service of the Divine Father and Redeemer and Sanctifier. He who can praise is as one in a thousand amongst those who can pray, and even amongst those who stay to give thanks. Prayer is human: intercession is human: thanksgiving is human: praise is Divine.

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

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Let us diligently cultivate this greatest of powers, this greatest of gifts. That is the very object of our gathering together. We meet to practise for heaven. We meet to assist ourselves and to assist one another in acquiring that new song which no man can learn but *the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth*[1]. If we can only learn that, we shall be able to expostulate with God, even as the Psalmist and One greater than he did expostulate, in hours of depression and despondency, on the ground that He who seems to be silent to us is yet He that *inhabiteth the praises of Israel.*

3. There is a third point to be noticed. It is an expostulation founded (if we might hazard the expression) on the *antecedents* of God. *My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me,* seeing that *our fathers trusted in Thee, and Thou didst deliver them?* That God should be silent to one of His creatures, calling upon Him day and night, is inconsistent

[1] Rev. xiv. 3.

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with what He has done, in all ages, for those who trusted in Him.

Faith in God is in one sense—and it is a very high sense—an hereditary thing.

God Himself encouraged this view of faith, when He said to the future Lawgiver of Israel, on His first appearing to him in the burning bush of Horeb, *I am the God of thy father*[1].

Yes, the *ancestry* of Redemption is a great matter.

To be able to appeal to God as having through many generations done thus and thus for those who trusted in Him; to be able to recall, like the faithful Timothy, a mother and a grandmother who had had the unfeigned faith dwelling in them, and who had shown that faith by teaching him *from a child* those Holy Scriptures which *are able to make men wise unto salvation*[2]; to be able to recall the beloved image of a father, long since laid on sleep, who walked through the wilderness of this world *looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*[3]; to

[1] Exod. iii. 6. [2] 2 Tim. i. 5. iii. 15. [3] Heb. xi. 10.

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be able, with personal application, to say, in the language of our Litany (itself borrowed from this sacred Book of Psalms), *O God, we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works that Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them*[1]; this gives great weight and great cogency to our arguments against depression and despondency in the things of God: it bases our hopes upon that which God has done, and enables us to say, in the language of a tried and assured conviction, *Look at the generations of old, and see: did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or whom did He ever despise that called upon Him*[2]*?*

And this is one of God's compensations for us who live in the latter days of His Church.

In some respects, we are at a disadvantage in comparison with earlier generations. If we could but have stood where Peter stood, or John, or James; have seen the touch of Christ cleanse the leper, give sight to the blind, or raise the dead; have been present in that

[1] Psalm xliv. 1. [2] Ecclus. ii. 10.

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upper room where the disciples were assembled, seen that unexpected presence, heard that grave yet tender greeting, and witnessed the satisfaction of a doubting Apostle in the actual sight of the pierced hand and the riven side[1]; no doubt we should have possessed helps to believing, yea a compulsion of faith, which now we have not. On the other hand, He who *hath done all things well*[2] has given us just one argument which they had not and could not have. He has left on record for us the experience of many ages, as to the healing virtue which goes forth from Jesus; the assurance of faith, and brightness of hope, and comfort of love, which has been the portion of all those who in the individuality of their own being—amidst temptations common to all, or infirmities peculiar to themselves—*have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them*[3], and have been enabled through Almighty grace to *hold the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the*

[1] John xx. 26, 27. [2] Mark vii. 37.
[3] Heb. vi. 18.

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end[1]. We can say, in moments of sadness, as the first disciples could not say, with reference to the distinctive hopes and promises of the Gospel, *Why art Thou so far from helping me*, when *our fathers trusted in Thee, and Thou didst deliver them?*

In this respect there is a peculiar comfort for us members of the Church of England, in the perpetual use of those very words and forms of worship which have expressed the wants and guided the utterances of the faithful through many centuries of past conflict and trial. It can never be unseasonable to remember and give thanks for that Providence of God which has taken care that this generation of worshippers should not have to grope its way, amongst many diverse forms and many opposite opinions, to a system of doctrine and ritual which it must make out fresh for itself from the holy Book of Inspiration; but has permitted it to enter upon an inheritance of calm wisdom and pious utterance, in which many have gone before it,

[1] Heb. iii. 14.

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and in which (God willing) many also shall follow after. When I enter this House of Prayer on the Lord's Day, and take into my hand the familiar Book of Common Prayer, out of which I am to lead or else to accompany the devotions of the Congregation; I feel a comfort and confidence in the recollection that out of this same Book men whose names are now canonized as those of fathers in Israel read of old to their people; that out of this same Book my father and my mother uttered the selfsame words which are now my responses and my songs of praise; insomuch that, when I find myself left without an answer in this place from the mercy-seat which is above, I can take upon my lips with fulness of meaning the expostulation of the Psalmist, and say, *Why, O my God, art Thou silent to me*, when my fathers of old time spake to Thee in these words and Thou answeredst them, *trusted in Thee*, and thus told their trust, *and Thou didst deliver them?*

I have thought that a few commonplace

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truths, such as were in all your hearts before I uttered them, might not come amiss to you this day[1]; a day which is destined, I trust, by God's mercy, to bear fruit in days after it, when, returning to our several homes, we set ourselves earnestly, for another year, to the work which we all have in hand; that of rendering God's worship, in the several Parishes, town and country, of this neighbourhood, more worthy (if it might be so) of Him, and more dear and lovely in the minds of His people below.

Let it never be forgotten that this, and nothing else or less than this, is the real object of our Association.

This day's gathering is but a means to an end. What we desire, what we seek, what (under God) we expect to realise, is, such an improvement of Church Music in the several Parishes which give us their cooperation, as shall make it, not more showy—God forbid—not more complicated, not more ornate, not

[1] This Discourse was prepared for delivery at a Church Choral Festival.

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more artistic—none of these things—just more congregational, more united, more hearty, more devotional; more like that primitive model of all Public Worship of which the Book of the Acts of the Apostles tells us, that they who were present *lifted up their voice to God with one accord*, and that the result of it was, by His grace, that *they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word of God with boldness*[1]. That is what we desire: God, in His mercy and goodness, grant it more and more to His Churches!

I know that there are those who still think—I say, *still*, because I believe that the thought is rapidly wearing out in our congregations—that the Service of God cannot possibly be too bare and plain; that music is the natural enemy of devotion; that the spirituality of worship may be measured by its destitution of all adjuncts and of all accompaniments. Let not such reasoners suppose that they have Scripture with them! They will scarcely doubt that the Psalms of David

[1] Acts iv. 24, 31.

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were handed over by him to the Chief Musician to be set to music, and that they were sung by the sons of Korah amidst all the pomp of a most elaborate and costly ritual. They can scarcely forget those repeated calls contained in them, not to the voice only, which is man's glory, but to psaltery and harp and organ too, to awake and utter God's praise[1]. They must remember that, on the most solemn night which earth ever saw, the Saviour of sinners Himself, heading His little band of followers towards the garden of gloom and anguish, first *sang an hymn* before He set forth to His Passion[2]. Nor can they deny that the *permission* at least of song is given in our Church's ritual alike to Psalm and Response, to Litany and Creed; all appointed to be *said or sung, sung or said,* as the wish of the people, the judgment of the Minister, or the circumstances of the place, may in each instance direct.

And what is the alternative? Answer from your own observation of Churches in

[1] Psalm cviii. 1, 2. cl. 3, 4. [2] Matt. xxvi. 30.

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which music is silent! Is it a warm and hearty response from the assembled People to every verse uttered by the Minister? Is it a sound like the voice of many waters, telling of hearts deeply engaged and affections keenly interested? Is that what we hear in Services in which the Organ is disused and all is left to the Congregation? O, if it were so—if it were indeed so—we should think twice, we should long pause and hesitate, before we exchanged that most solemn of utterances for one possibly less universal and more studied! But you know that it is not so. You know that the alternative is not between the natural voice and the voice of song, but between the voice of song and—silence!

And more and more is the judgment of our Congregations, all over England, declaring itself in favour of a Musical Service. I hear it myself, from the lips of pious and Evangelical Clergymen, that they find it absolutely necessary, if they would not see their Congregations week by week dwindle and

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melt away from before them, to add the attraction of a Musical Service to what they trust is still the attraction of a sound Gospel. There is a feeling abroad amongst us, not in one place only, but through the length and breadth of England, that nothing can be too good for God's worship; and that the voice of man, which He has so marvellously endowed with sweet and thrilling music, must be employed, not at its worst but at its best, in setting forth His praise. The fiat has gone forth: it is left to us to use it or to abuse.

And I will say this, now that the fact is so, without fear of offence and without fear of contradiction, that it becomes a sacred duty, on the part of all persons, to prepare themselves to take a share, as God has enabled them, in this musical devotion. Few indeed are they who are incapacitated by nature, or who might not easily qualify themselves by practice, for some of the humbler parts (at least) of this work and office of Divine Praise. Most grievous is it—a terrible

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sign of coldness and deadness in the life of God—to see persons, who can charm others in a private room by the exhibition of musical taste and skill, standing mute and dumb in the Church of God. Great cause have they to humble themselves for their past negligence, and to set themselves in good earnest to help by every power of theirs the Church's song!

To others, not gifted with any natural or acquired skill in music, we would still say, Be not afraid to use, in the plainer portions at least of the Service, such voice and ear as God has given you. If any discord should ever mar your music, the proof of your will and of your effort will far, far more than atone for it. The voice of the Congregation will drown your imperfect melody: and God who sees the heart will count its faultiness a virtue.

With regard to those few—I believe them to be few indeed—who are truly incompetent to swell, even thus imperfectly, the voice of praise; and with regard also to certain parts

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of the Musical Service (where it is used in its completeness) which absolutely require both ear and voice, skill and practice, for their full and perfect use; I will say but this—very seriously and very honestly—that it is no small profit, to a devout worshipper, to have the words of praise amplified as it were and augmented in the utterance; to be able to stand, with the Book of Prayer or Praise in his hand, while the verses of the Canticle or the Anthem even repeat and reiterate themselves in his hearing; and thus to be allowed to enter, with a deeper meditation and a more intelligent pondering, into phrases which are apt otherwise to skim the surface of the mind without entering it; and thus to have the opportunity of communing with Him, the Lord of the Churches, concerning revelations which are full of Him, in words breathed of old time by His Spirit. He who *inhabiteth the praises of Israel* will not count that worship meaningless, or reject that praise because it is silent. Nay, we read in the Book of Psalms itself, that all *praise waiteth*—yea, as to its

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profoundest utterances, *is silent—for God in Zion*[1].

When the services of this day reach their end, pray that something of them may remain! Pray that their blessing fade not and die not with them! Pray for God's benediction upon the work which we of this Congregation have in hand; upon the praises, in some twenty surrounding Churches, of a coming year! Pray that He will evermore assist with His grace the hearts of His choristers and the hearts of His musicians! Pray that no spirit of trifling or levity, no spirit of vanity or self-display, no spirit of unkindness, jealousy, or ill suspicion, may intrude itself amongst us into services which should be all love! Pray that His name may be made known upon earth by the help of praises inhabited by Himself!

And may He Himself, whose we are, and whom in all things we seek to serve, grant to us and to all His Congregations, far off and near, an increase of light and hope, of peace

[1] Psalm lxv. i.

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and joy, *till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*[1] *!*

[1] Eph. iv. 13.

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DISCOURSE VI.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

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THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

2 JOHN 10.

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.

THERE is one portion of the Services of our Church, so full of deeply important matter, yet at the same time so often misused and misconstrued, that I have thought it well deserving of special and separate consideration. And yet if I were to say that the subject of this discourse will be the Athanasian Creed, I almost fear that it would be regarded as the announcement of an unpractical, an uninteresting, an almost repulsive subject.

We are all aware of the treatment which this Creed has received at the hands of many worshippers and some ministers of our Church.

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Dislike and contempt for it have been sometimes openly exhibited where such exhibitions are most wrong and indecent. Persons have been seen to seat themselves, with an air almost of defiance, when the first sound of the *Quicunque vult* fell upon their ear in the house of God. Some Christian ministers never read it, and many members of the congregation never join in it. Particular expressions in it have furnished the scoffer with his readiest weapons of attack, and (which is much more to be lamented) have caused to certain minds, in the prospect more especially of entering the ministry of the Church, seasons of deep disquietude, resulting, it may be, in the discarding of that armour which they were just girding on for the life-long combat of the ordained soldier of Christ.

Now on all these accounts it is most important that the mind should be early prepared to estimate aright this portion of our Church's worship. It is not in the tone of excuse or apology, but rather in all the confidence of sincerity and truth, that we would

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approach the consideration of the Athanasian Creed. If apology were needed for any phrase or any sentiment contained in it, it would be amply found in the ancient date of its origin and in the historical circumstances which attended its composition.

You can never expect to find in a very ancient document an exactness of adaptation to the taste or the feeling of a later age. Expressions which were perfectly intelligible to the writer and to the first readers, may become difficult of explanation when the clue to their meaning is lost by time. Other expressions, which were justified at the time by a recent experience of the serious consequences of error, may sound harsh beyond what is necessary when the errors to which they refer have passed into the dim back-ground of a remote antiquity. Or it may be, again, that a form of speech which was usual and natural in dealing with opponents in a distant age, is stronger and more condemnatory than the polished ear or (let us believe) the charitable judgment of our own time can hear or

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use with entire approbation. All these things may be: and yet the composition which contains these drawbacks to its hearty acceptance with us may be, all the time, true and valuable; a needed protest against errors possible because once prevalent; a sound summary of a faith once delivered to the saints, or a solemn warning against corruptions by which that faith may be, because it has been, disfigured or mutilated.

Or it might happen, once again, that great practical difficulties may beset the modification or alteration of a Church's formularies, either from the absence of an authority qualified to undertake it, or from the risk—always a serious consideration—of the rashness with which change might be attempted, and the impossibility of fixing definitely beforehand to what objects it shall be restricted or at what point limited. All these things may leave for long, perhaps for ever, on the pages of a Common Prayer-Book, defects and blemishes, to be acknowledged with candour, yet acquiesced in with patience, by those who

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still estimate too highly the work of the Church, and sympathize too deeply with its principles, to allow themselves to entertain the question of deserting its ranks or seeking elsewhere a freedom of judgment which the Church itself is ever ready to concede to them so long as it stops short of wilfulness and of licence.

When a few such admissions have been made with reference to the Athanasian Creed, we shall have said enough to prepare ourselves for its serious study, and, as I believe, for its devout and thankful use.

We can little appreciate in this late age of the world the magnitude of those dangers through which the Providence of God, and (let us add) the promised presence of Christ by His Spirit, once steered the storm-tossed ark of His Church. We read now, with an indifference not unmingled with impatience, of the heresies of Nestorius, Apollinaris, and Eutyches, perhaps of Arius himself, and we marvel at the importance attached to them by men who were regarded as wise and

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learned in their generation, and who saw in these subtleties matter for apprehension which we regard as fanciful, or a justification of censures which we listen to as unchristian. Yet it was by means of these repeated protests against error on the right hand and on the left, that the truth of Revelation was preserved to us unsullied. And a closer examination of these several so-called heresies would probably detect in each the germ at least of a disastrous and fatal misconception of the character, office, or doctrine of Him in whom our one hope centres. As these successive roots of bitterness were cleared away, the faith of Christ was gradually shaped into a form somewhat more set and systematic than we might have desired, but yet one more distinctly expressed and more easily to be recognized; a form less beautiful perhaps than in its first heavenly freshness, but on the other hand better qualified to do battle with the countless hosts, open and secret, of its earthly enemies.

Nor was the one form in reality exchanged

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for the other. If the Articles of Faith, and some forms of worship, had become more rigidly systematic than when the Gospel first came from the hands of its Divine Author, yet the Church still possessed the record of that Divine Original, and might read in the Holy Scriptures the very words of Christ Himself, the account of the very life which He lived for us, and the very death which He died. In the one, she had those definitions and deductions which the perverse ingenuity of man had rendered necessary, to guard the simple from being misled, and to inform the enquirer as to her rules and doctrines: in the other, the Scriptures of truth, she had the living words by which souls are nourished, and through which the spirit of man holds communion with the Spirit of God. Each of these two had and has its use: we doubt not which is the more precious, but we believe that both are indispensable.

Read then the Creed before us as the record of those feelings of confidence and of thankfulness with which the Church of the

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fifth century reviewed the way by which God had led her through the labyrinth of human error into the clear light of a formed faith and an established doctrine. Each one of its doctrinal clauses is, not so much the statement of a truth, as the repudiation of an existing and dangerous error: each one tells of a peril through which the Faith had passed and from which God had given it a good deliverance: each one must have thrilled the hearts of those who first sang it, with the sense as of a shipwreck escaped, with the comfort and joy of a Divine intervention and rescue. And if we cannot now enter, as of course we cannot, into the very feelings of those who wrote and read it as a hymn of triumphal praise, let us not forget to thank God for that quietness and calm which He has given to His Church on earth, so far at least as the substance of its faith is concerned, and let us not rashly throw away those bulwarks of sound doctrine which testify to His past mercies, if they be not still needed as instruments of protection and defence.

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The subjects embodied in the Athanasian Creed are beyond all question the most important that can occupy the thoughts of a Christian worshipper. There is a wide difference between it and any other. Between it and the Apostles' Creed there is a difference so wide that, even apart from external evidence, we could tell from their contents that whole centuries of strife and trouble had rolled between them. Thankful might we be, if the simplicity of the Apostles' Creed had continued to be, as once doubtless it had been, sufficient to express all that Christians need utter as the symbol of their common faith and the condition of their united worship. It better represents, no doubt, the Gospel as it came from Heaven: but it does not therefore follow that a more elaborate and in some respects less attractive summary of belief may not have been rendered necessary by the experienced exigencies of the Gospel as it abode on earth. When the ingenuity of Eastern speculation had once begun to busy itself with the formation of theories as to the

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great Object of worship and the Person of the Incarnate Word, it was needful that, negatively at least if not positively, the truth upon these subjects should be expressed, so as to banish errors which had already crept in, and preclude, as far as might be, the rise of others, in a region where all error is vital and all variety is at once discord.

The Church wearied with conflict is in a different position from the Church just founded. It must reflect upon past perils: it must rehearse its experience in words heretofore unuttered. The Church which was once satisfied to speak of an Almighty Father, Maker of Heaven and earth, of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and of the Holy Ghost, must now combine into a more connected whole these distinct elements of faith and worship; must use terms, imperfect indeed but not therefore inexpressive, to assert the union in one Godhead of these three Divine Persons; declaring that to each one by Himself are ascribed in the Holy Scriptures, all the incommunicable properties of a perfect Divinity—self-existence, eternity,

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immensity, omnipotence, dominion, Deity—and yet on the other hand maintaining as the one foundation of all true religion, that there is but One God, and One Lord; that the Object of all faith is, not Three, but One; that, while we worship one God in Trinity, that Trinity itself must be worshipped in Unity. What is there in this but the expression, with such distinctness as human thought and human language can supply, of a truth implicitly if not explicitly taught in every page of Scripture, and with regard to which no expression but that of Scripture itself would have been needful, had not erroneous expressions of it made it necessary, as time advanced, to elaborate the true?

Thus is it also with regard to the second great subject of the Athanasian Creed, the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It might have been enough, as in the earliest age of all it was enough, to take for granted with reference to our Saviour that double character which the first view of the New Testament evidently gives Him, of Divinity and Humanity, God

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and Man, without attempting to define the limits of either element, or the method of their coexistence and combination. It was better so: that was the form in which God sent, in which Christ brought, to us the Gospel. We saw there that Christ was Man; we saw also there that Christ was God: we were not told how He could be the one and yet also the other: we only saw that He was this, and that He was that, and yet that but One Person was spoken of—God in power and wisdom, Man in sympathy and in circumstance: this was the Gospel as it came, and we mourn over that necessity which drove men to define what God had given. But that necessity which was to be lamented was not therefore to be evaded: man had defined erroneously, and therefore the Church must define correctly. Man had said, Christ is one, and therefore He is only God, or else, therefore He is only Man: the Church must express, however imperfectly, that He is both; not only perfect God, with one half of man's nature, His body, appended to Him, so that the

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Divinity was the soul to the human body; but perfect Man also, of a reasonable soul as well as human flesh subsisting, yet with both these parts of a perfect humanity so taken into the perfect Divinity, as that, though the Natures were two, the Person was one. Man had said, The nature of Christ is twofold, and therefore what happened to Him who had the one part of that nature did not necessarily happen also to Him who had the other: the Man was born, the Man suffered, the Man died, but not so the Divine Man, the God and Man: and in this the Church saw that which was perilous to the unity of Christ's Person, that which had been the root of a thousand fanciful notions as to the method of the incorporation of the Godhead in the Manhood, and found it needful to assert, beyond the possibility of any evasion of her meaning, that our Saviour is not two but one Christ, one not indeed by any conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but yet by a taking of the Manhood into God, so that henceforth God and Man should be one Christ.

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And then, when these deeper mysteries have been thus premised, how majestic and how touching is that brief summary of the events which befell the Saviour, and the events in which we all have so deep, so awful, a concern! How grave the application thus made of matters which perhaps seemed till then to bear but slightly upon human duty or destiny! *At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies: and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.*

I have reserved for latest mention those expressions in the Creed now before us, which have in fact caused far greater difficulty to scrupulous persons than the parts on which I have dwelt. With respect to the doctrinal statements of the Creed, they are contented with saying that they do not fully understand them; that there are amongst them expressions with which they cannot sympathize, as well as many in which they heartily concur. But there are also expressions which they

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at once condemn as presumptuous and uncharitable; those which seem to speak of agreement with every part of this Creed as the necessary condition of salvation. *Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly...He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity...This is the Catholic Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.*

I suppose there is no one on whose ear these expressions have not fallen somewhat harshly. We cannot be satisfied with the explanation, that they are a charitable warning; that, the truths contained in the Creed being the truths of God's Revelation, it is an act of brotherly kindness to testify to men the peril of disbelieving them. We all feel that the words themselves bear rather the aspect of threatening than of warning; that they breathe the spirit of the Law rather than of the Gospel; that they would neither have been written if the Creed were of a later age, nor retained if the Church could readily and

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safely have removed the part without discarding the whole. All men agree to understand these clauses in a modified and limited sense. There does not exist the man who would apply them quite literally to the person, at all events, of him who doubts or differs from some of the details of doctrine to which they are appended. We all agree that at least they must be applied only to wilful unbelief; to the repudiation of the whole or a part of the truth by one who has had every opportunity of receiving it, and has deliberately, from wrong motives, refused and rejected it. And as we never can know for certain the motives which may have prompted such a rejection, we should be afraid to apply the awful words thus used to any individual, almost to any class of opinion, of whom or of which we have ourselves had experience. Further than this, we observe that the words themselves, in their strictest original meaning, can scarcely have been designed to apply to every minute detail into which the Creed enters, but rather to the great fundamental

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doctrines of the Trinity in Unity, of the union of God and Man in Christ, and of the more practical revelations which form its conclusion; in other words, to the general revelation of the great Object of our worship, and of the purposes of mercy and judgment which He has made known to us in Christ's Gospel.

Let me remark, before I pass on, that there is such a thing as a tacit repeal of words which may still be retained in our formularies of faith; certainly that there is such a thing as an authoritative construction put upon such words by an almost universal consent; and that this tacit repeal, or authoritative construction, applies in the strongest manner to the words before us, so far as regards their apparent condemnation, without regard to circumstances, opportunities, or motives, of all those who differ in one iota from any one particular of the abstruse and mysterious doctrines here enunciated. No candidate for the holy office of the ministry ought to have his conscience hampered or his peace disturbed by the inability to accept literally phrases

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which every wise ruler of the Church and every thoughtful minister for several centuries has interpreted with a wide latitude.

But, wide as is the latitude which we must allow and claim in the interpretation of these words of solemn threatening, we must never forget that that latitude has limits, and that there are classes of men, and that there are individual men, though we dare not and would not define them, to whom terms such as these are strictly appropriate.

It is with faith as with practice. No Christian would scruple to say with St Paul, *Be not deceived: neither idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God*[1]. We speak thus in general: and yet we should neither point out the persons to whom such denunciations are applicable, nor forget the possibility of a repentance which may transfer the individual transgressor into a most opposite class of men. It is with minds as with lives. Our Saviour Himself says,

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

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He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned[1]. And it has sometimes been suggested that that verse might well be substituted in the Athanasian Creed for the somewhat more definite and at all events human words in which a denunciation similar in its general import is expressed. That awful saying of our Lord shows us that there is an unbelief which is fatal to man's salvation: we presume not to fix its limits or to guide its application: we know that He who uttered it is Himself alone the Judge of either, and that He will know how to estimate aright the degree of light which has been neglected, the circumstances and the opportunities which have palliated or aggravated the guilt.

But with ourselves is our concern. And the Athanasian Creed, in what are called its condemnatory clauses, echoes the language of our Lord Himself in reminding us that *every man is responsible, not for his conduct only, but for his belief.* If it were only for

[1] Mark xvi. 16.

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this testimony, it would be well worthy of its place amongst the documents of the Christian Faith.

A man is responsible for his faith as well as for his conduct; for what he believes as well as for what he does.

Too often we judge differently. We say, 'A man cannot make himself believe. Belief is an involuntary act: if it is forced, it is nugatory. This is true, and not true. A man cannot suddenly say, I will believe this: but every man may, and every man does, influence his belief by forming or refusing to form certain habits of mind and life.

There are habits of *mind* which bear directly upon this result, of faith or unbelief. Early in life we begin to form them. There is a vanity which shows itself in cavilling at what is most surely believed by others. There is a wilfulness which plays with truth; a waywardness which will rather go wrong than follow. There is an indolence which will not grapple with a difficulty; and there is a disingenuousness which is blind to the most

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convincing argument if it points toward the sacrifice of a pleasure or the exertion of an effort. These evil habits of mind are often formed early: and they lead, one and all, straight towards unbelief; such an unbelief as is certainly not venial but deeply culpable.

If the Gospel be true, these are faults which must tell upon our ability to accept it. The Gospel demands of us, first and last, candour; a readiness to weigh evidence, to consider demands of duty, to ponder consequences, with the simple desire to know what is true that we may do what is right. If this quality be wanting, in any one of its parts, the Gospel, if it be true, has no chance with us: its call is that for which we have no ear, its evidences are those for which we have no judgment.

This is one of the most serious statements that can be addressed to the young. They are forming habits of mind; and upon their habits of mind will depend their faith.

What a solemn import does this give to matters which at the time may be regarded

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as almost indifferent! Vanity, wilfulness, indolence, perverseness, these things, if they be suffered in us early—and no one but we ourselves by God's help can eradicate or counteract them—these things may cost us our faith, and if our faith, then our salvation. *He that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him*[1].

This is one of the two reasons why a man is responsible to God, answerable at the cost of his soul, for that soul's belief. Unbelief is the result of habits of mind, in the formation of which he has been, throughout, and alone, the agent.

The other reason is, that habits of *life*, as well as of mind, tell directly and powerfully upon the belief. And these may be of two kinds; habits of act, and habits of neglect; sins of omission, and sins of commission.

Every time that we omit our morning or our evening prayer, we are contributing towards the inability to believe. Every day that our Bible remains closed, we are contri-

[1] John iii. 36.

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buting towards the inability to believe. Every day that we live without God in our world, whatever that world be, whether the world of youth or the world of age, the world of business or of amusement, of intellect or of society, we are contributing, directly contributing, towards the future inability to believe.

Why so? Because faith is the spiritual sight of God; and the eye that is unused to God's presence becomes at last incapable of it.

But we cannot stop even here. We have one word still to add. Every time that we sin, we are counteracting the possibility of future belief. Every word by which we dishonour God, trifle with things holy, or blunt the reverence of another, tends to prevent our ever believing. Every unkind and uncharitable and violent word, is slowly but surely undermining our belief of the truth. Every falsehood we utter, every equivocation, every disguise of the fact, every misrepresentation and deception, is forming in us the habit of infidelity. Still more, far, far more, every

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impure thought, every unholy imagination, is creating in us the inability ever to believe.

And again we ask, Why so? Because these things are making it our interest to disbelieve the Gospel. Because the Gospel says, They who do such things shall not enter heaven; and therefore they who do such things must hope at last that the Gospel is a fable.

O the solemn, the tremendous issues of the life that now is! If in one sense each day we live is a distinct unit, for the supply of the wants of which we ask God and trust Him implicitly with the morrow; in another sense the whole life of man is a continuous, an unbroken chain, each link of which is firmly riveted into the link that follows. Now we are sowing: one day we shall reap—nay, nay, we are reaping too! Each day we live is bearing fruit in the next, and that in eternity. Thoughts are telling upon mind, words upon character, acts upon life; and the product of all these is the immortal man, hewn and shaped by his own workmanship

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into a temple of the evil one, or else a habitation of God. *Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*[1]*!*

[1] Psalm xc. 12.

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DISCOURSE VII.

INTERCESSION.

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INTERCESSION.

EXODUS XXXII. 32.

Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.

INTERCESSION is one of Nature's voices. We should expect it to have its counterpart in the things of God.

Let a mother have a son, or a wife a husband, pressed for payment of a debt, or threatened with prosecution for a crime, you will not hear then of intellectual or moral difficulties lying in the way of intercession; you will not hear then of the improbability of the appeal being successful, or of the mischief of such interferences between fault and its con-

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sequences. It is the natural thing then, above argument, out of the reach of logic, almost excluding calculations of possibility, for the yearning soul to go forth in entreaty and expostulation. *The tender and delicate woman* will walk the length of England from the North to the South to beg a sister's life, though the chances are a thousand to one against her even seeing the sovereign, and yet more overwhelming still against that sovereign pardoning. Yes, because Intercession is one of Nature's voices, not to be silenced when the matter in question is one of earthly life and bodily suffering. Smite the rock hard enough, this stream will always flow: dig the field deep enough, the field of sorrow and suffering, this treasure you will always get to: the treasure of generous endeavour, the stream of unselfish intercession.

And shall there be nothing corresponding to this in the world of grace and of the Spirit? Shall the doctrine of the self-sacrificing One say nothing but of selfish prayer, and sternly warn off from supplication for another the

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soul which a natural attraction had already, as by instinct, drawn to it?

A dearly loved brother sails to-morrow for a long exile of enterprise in Africa: does the sister deal presumptuously when she not only bows the knee herself to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also writes to ask the prayers of friends far off and near in behalf of this imperilled traveller by land and water?

O not so! Intercession is not an impulse to be counteracted, but a grace to be fostered.

Where shall we begin in speaking of it? Let us throw ourselves into the subject anywhere. We can scarcely touch it without benefit. May God make it more and more the temper, the instinct, the employment of our souls!

What is Intercession?

The word means properly intervention, the going between; as, for example, between a candidate and a patron, between a maligned man and the calumny, between an

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oppressed man and his tyrant, between a condemned man and his death-warrant. Thus it might be extended, without violence to the word, as far as the kindred notions of Mediation or Atonement.

But the usage of the term, and the proper sense of its Greek original, give to Intercession a more limited and a more special meaning.

Intercession is the approaching or visiting another in behalf of some one. It is application, entreaty, supplication, not for myself but for another.

He whom we thus visit is, of course, God. He for whom we entreat may be any one. It may be a near friend, it may be a loved household, it may be a society, it may be a Church, it may be a nation. And the subject and object of the application is equally unconfined. It may be a temporal blessing: continuance of health or restoration from sickness; the prospering of a venture, or the averting of a sorrow; peace and love at home, or protection from aggression or war-

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fare abroad. It may be a spiritual blessing: and herein, a soul's comfort, or a soul's recovery; the first turning, or the later edifying; the welfare of a congregation, or the extension of God's kingdom. The only restriction is that, to make it Intercession, it must be unselfish; it must be entreaty for another, not for myself.

Now is there any peculiar mystery, any antecedent impossibility—let us ask the question plainly—in this sort of prayer? Certainly not the latter; not a fatal obstacle to it: for it is a part of the Gospel. Nothing but gross, coarse, utter infidelity can call it an impossibility that Intercession should be availing. Thus much will be evident as we proceed.

But is it something very mysterious, an idea making an unusual demand upon Christian faith, to conceive of blessings flowing into the soul of a man, or—for it is just as difficult—into a man's life, through the instrumentality of another's prayers? Is it not just thus in every thing? Are we not so made, and so

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placed, and so circumstanced daily, as that we derive a large part of our comfort, a large part of our efficiency, a large part of our usefulness, not directly from ourselves, but mediately through the help and through the sympathy and through the support of those around us? If God is pleased to grant some of His own best and highest gifts to us through another's prayers, at least this is consistent and of a piece with what we see to be His dealing in lower and commoner matters.

But we are not left to such reasonings. The duty of Intercession is laid upon us: the reward of Intercession is revealed. Scripture abounds in precept of it and in example: experience attests its blessing: in Intercession we are likest God.

By intercession we do not mean an endeavour by importunity to arouse indifference or to overbear reluctance. God forbid that we should so conceive of Him as that He is either indifferent or reluctant! God forbid that we should so conceive of ourselves as to imagine that importunity of ours either is

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or ought to be able to alter His purpose or shake His resolve! By intercession—even when we speak of an intercession above man's—we mean nothing of all this. We mean the carrying into God's very presence of real anxieties, real longings and yearnings, concerning another; the carrying of these things thither, and the spreading them out there, and the pouring them into the Divine ear and the Divine heart, as things which He (with reverence be it spoken) shares with us; things which we suffer or desire or groan under according to His will, and because He in His Gospel has bidden thus to do. That is Intercession.

So understood, is it not indeed a large part of the whole work and office, not of us poor sinners only, so many as have a heart to feel either for ourselves or for a brother, but even of those at whose feet we are not worthy to sit—of saints already made perfect, of superhuman, angelic intelligences—of Christ and of the Holy Spirit—I will dare to say, in one aspect, of the Father Himself?

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I do not suppose there is one person in the Christian Congregation who does not admit the duty. *I exhort,* St Paul says, *that first of all,* as a matter of primary obligation, *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men*[1]. We cannot try to enumerate all the special and personal exhortations scattered through the New Testament upon this subject: as, for instance, when the same Apostle bids the Roman Christians *for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, to strive with him in their prayers to God for him,* first for deliverance from perils into which he was just entering; secondly, for the success of a charitable mission which was just then interesting him; and thirdly, for a joyful and profitable visit afterwards to themselves[2]: or as when he tells the Corinthians that he regards their prayers for him as actually helping his daily safety, insomuch that the gift of continued life and usefulness is bestowed upon him *by means of many persons,* and demands the

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 1. [2] Rom. xv. 30—32.

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thanksgiving of many as for a blessing granted to themselves[1]: or as when, once again, he says to the Philippians that his trying imprisonment shall turn, he knows, to his salvation *through their prayer*, which he sets (in so many words) side by side in importance with *the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*[2]. And not to multiply these references, which might almost fill a volume, let us only add the express words of the Epistle of St James, *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed*[3]. Mutual confession and mutual intercession are two prominent parts of the whole Christian life. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man*, for others as for himself, *availeth much. Brethren, pray for us*[4].

How well our own Church of England has caught the spirit of these exhortations, you will all bear witness. How large a part of our public worship is Intercession! Pass it not lightly over, as the manner of some is,

[1] 2 Cor. i. 11.
[2] Phil. i. 19.
[3] James v. 16.
[4] 1 Thess. v. 25.

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counting no prayer worth praying which has not in it some touch or echo of selfishness. Rather count that part of the Service most important, because most Christ-like, which is the most self-forgetting; those parts which, as respects man, are Intercession, and those parts which, as respects God, are Praise.

In the hope of drawing your affection towards this great work and duty, I have read as the text an intercession made by that most marvellous and most God-like of all the sons of men, the lawgiver and mediator of Israel, himself the nearest type, in office and character, of One who should come after him—of One who is not Man only.

The whole life of that heroic saint was a life of Intercession. It was exactly that which we have tried to express as the very definition of Intercession; *a bearing of others upon the heart in God's presence.* Towards Israel he was God's Mediator: towards God he was Israel's Intercessor. The two offices summed up his life. Behold him, towards Israel, all authority, all command — where

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need was, all severity. No womanish impulses of tenderness neutralize or soften down his sternness, when he stands in the gate of the camp, with the people naked in their wantonness before him, and cries, *Who is on the Lord's side?* then *put every man his sword by his side, and slay every man his brother—and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.* What had he said, to nerve all those arms for such terrible strength? He had said, *Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother, that He may bestow upon you a blessing this day*[1]. There spoke the Mediator; the man who knew himself to be towards Israel the Lawgiver and the Judge. But hear him when on the morrow he returns into God's presence. Who can read without emotion that most pathetic, that unprecedented, that perhaps (if reviewed in cold blood) excessive and scarce justifiable intercession? *Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if*

[1] Exod. xxxii. 25—29.

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Thou wilt forgive their sin—what untold emphasis lies in that unfinished sentence, as if the tongue refused to tell the heart's unuttered groaning—*and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written!* Heaven itself will be no heaven to him without his Israel! Forgive them, or else forgive not me! And this is the man who yesterday was all zeal for God against Israel. Ah! there is no change. It is not that *with the morning cool reflection came.* It is only that the Mediator of yesterday is the Intercessor of to-day: he who strove yesterday for God, even unto blood, with Israel, is pleading to-day, even unto blood, for Israel with God.

I despair of adding force, by words of mine, or even by multiplication of Scripture examples, to the persuasiveness of this one pattern. See in it how far Intercession may go, and yet in God's sight—even if it need, like this, some correction—be blameless! Read here the warrant for every outpoured tear by which a Christian, yearning over his brother, has wetted God's mercy-seat! O, it

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is not this which offends! Rather is it the cold indifference with which we can look on upon lives spoilt and souls ruined. Rather is it the selfish heartlessness with which a man or a woman can go and come between God above and earth below—suing for self, asking pardon, asking grace, asking help and consolation, for self—not asking, or asking slightly and negligently, any one of these things for any one other. Where amongst us is the Psalmist's cry, *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not Thy law.—I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved*[1]*?* Let these sorrows be on your soul when you enter the Presence, and assuredly there will be Intercession. Grief for another, carried before God, *is* intercession; the intercession of the humble Christian, the intercession of the man of God.

But we may rise higher than earth, and find Intercession still. Saints and Angels are intercessors. Not indeed such intercessors as we can invoke. Holy Scripture rebukes those

[1] Psalm cxix. 136, 158.

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who would *intrude into things which they have not seen*, by *a voluntary humility and worshipping of Angels*[1]. We have no warrant in Scripture for asking, still less for trusting in, any intercession save one. Not Apostles or saints, not the Mother of Christ, not the holy Angels, are man's mediators with the Father. The link is wanting between us and them; the link of access to them on our part, though not (we believe) of interest in us on theirs. To look to them is to be false to Another. One is our Intercessor, as One is our Mediator, even Christ.

But it is no forgetfulness of that one Intercessor, to take comfort, or to find admonition, in the thought, that earth and heaven also are instinct everywhere and alive with intercession. Can the cry, *How long, O Lord*[2]*?* arise from spirits of the just made perfect, and not be a cry of intercession for those who are still battling and suffering, and sinning too, below? That is the very keynote of the expostulation! The Church so far perfected

[1] Col. ii. 18. [2] Rev. vi. 10.

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that it has laid aside the body—the Church expecting and longing for the *clothing upon*[1] of the Resurrection—is an intercessor with God in heaven for a Church still militant, because still encumbered and entangled with the besetting clogging vestment of the body.

And those holy Angels who behold the face of God[2], and are yet His ministering servants for the earthly heirs of salvation[3], they too pour out before Him their sinless souls in a ceaseless work of self-forgetting Intercession. Can they, as Scripture tells, *desire to look into*[4] the things of Christ and of man's Redemption, and not remember before the throne of God souls redeemed and not redeemed; redeemed inasmuch as the atoning blood has purchased, not redeemed inasmuch as the crisis of the personal being is yet hanging between death and life? Can they, as Christ tells[5], find joy in the repentance of the penitent, and not travail in birth till that repentance be realized? Can

[1] 2 Cor. v. 2. [2] Matt. xviii. 10.
[3] Heb. i. 14. [4] 1 Pet. i. 12.
[5] Luke xv. 10.

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they go forth on their countless errands of protection and ministration, and yet be indifferent how many frustrate them by wilfulness of walking, or defy them by obduracy of sinning? Yes, heaven itself, even (if we might say so) these lower heavens, the home of saints and Angels, are vocal and as it were alive with Intercession: man alone, for whom that intercession arises, man alone is dull, stupid, and silent: the Church below sits or sleeps through her prayers, save when the conscious exigencies of the individual being galvanize one soul here and there into a supplication which is all selfish!

But shall we stop here—here on the very threshold of that great example, which is to all of us at once the hope and the pattern?

The Intercession of Jesus Christ.

Even of it men have spoken sometimes most unguardedly, most unscripturally, most offensively.

As they have made the Death of Christ a sacrifice to the Divine wrath; the substitution of an innocent Victim for the guilty, as though

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God must have blood, and cared not whose—when they ought to have remembered how Scripture always tells of the love of God in giving, in not sparing, His own Son, but freely surrendering Him for us all—even so they have made the Intercession of Christ a perpetual coming between the Destroyer and His condemned, a constant pleading of that blood which alone appeased the anger, a daily and hourly standing between the Hand that would smite and the souls crouching beneath it. O terrible perversion of the sweet and blessed reality! *I and my Father are one*[1] is as true of the Intercessor as it was true of the Sacrifice. Christ the Intercessor bears upon His heart in heaven all the sufferings and all the sins of mankind, not that He may restrain God from punishing, but that He may evermore apply to them that Divine love which first sent and gave Him. That is the Intercession. It is the bearing upon the soul of the Redeemer in His glory every distress and every peril and every temptation and every

[1] John x. 30.

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sin which may interfere with the realization of His salvation in any the humblest and most lost creature for whom He shed his precious blood. It is not the violent extorting for them from an unwilling God of an exemption from wrath: it is the representation of them, in their woes and in their weaknesses, before Him whose love for them is as strong and as prompt and as self-sacrificing as His own. Something of this is in the words of St Paul, *It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*[1].

Nor is even this the last thought. As there is an Intercession of Christ, so also, the same chapter tells, there is an Intercession of the Spirit. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*[2]. When we kneel in prayer, and the heart is full, and the soul

[1] Rom. viii. 33, 34. [2] Rom. viii. 26.

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athirst for God, and yet the tongue can find no words, and the mind itself fails to define into exactness the wish and the aspiration which is struggling within; then He who searches the heart reads in this silence the most eloquent of words, even the breathings of the Holy Spirit Himself making intercession for us. He has the case in hand: He, nearer to us than our own consciousness, is entreating in us below as Christ is entreating for us in heaven: the Intercession, the Divine Intercession, is everywhere at work: neither earth nor heaven is silent from it: God will have us to be saved, and the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, are all concerned, all interested, in the Intercession.

For I have ventured to describe even the Father Himself as in one sense an Intercessor. If the Son intercedes for man, if the Spirit intercedes in man, so does God Himself, the Father, intercede with man. It is St Paul's account of the ministry; *as though God did beseech you by us*[1]. O, it is no care-

[1] 2 Cor. v. 20.

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less, languid, half-hearted interest which God takes in these lives and in these souls of ours! He pleads with us, He intercedes with us, in our own behalf. He remonstrates with us concerning our sins, He expostulates with us concerning our perversenesses, He overwhelms us day by day with His goodness: yea, He is longsuffering towards us still, *not willing that any should perish*[1], because He, our God, is our Intercessor too.

The subject is boundless. We must end.

You have seen what Intercession is, and who are engaged in it. All the good, all the holy, in earth and in heaven. If we would share in the work which occupies and which tasks the noblest powers, we must give ourselves to this. We must feel one for another —feel before God—and that is our intercession. That is, for us, what Angels are doing; what saints in rest are doing; what the Holy Ghost is doing in His temple below; what Christ is doing within the veil above. It is the surest way of Christian progress.

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 9.

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The man who intercedes for men; for his family, for his friends, for his Church, for his country; for the suffering, by name; for the sinful, with understanding; for the sick, the solitary, the outcast, the wretched, the tempted, the dying, with a minute thought of the condition and circumstances of each; that man will get on, will make advance, in the life of God: his prayer will not only fly to its mark, it will return also into his bosom: his very work is the Spirit's work, is Christ's work, is God's work—it must be twice and thrice blessed.

Even on particular occasions, even in individual instances, intercession will be his strength. Sometimes, when he would pray, he cannot: words will not come, thoughts will not come, attention itself wanders, the life is dead within him: let him intercede! Let him think of some dear person, whose life or whose soul is jeopardied: let him pray for that other: the fountain of prayer is unsealed in that effort, and he who began with

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praying for another shall rise answered for himself.

Only see that your intercession be patient. Of all prayers intercession the most needs patience. It seems sometimes through long years as if there were none to hear nor any that regarded. The life for which you have prayed continues wretched: the soul for which you have prayed persists in being lost. It is in vain. No, not in vain! God's mercies are not thus limited: no, nor His resources of operation: no, nor yet the time of His answering. *One day is with Him as a thousand years*—think of that—*and a thousand years as one day*[1]. Learn something from His long-suffering. Look upward, look onward, and look upward still. He measures not time as we measure. Pray still, still intercede: the answer may be *yet for an appointed time*, in spite of appearances: *though it tarry, wait for it*[2]: come it will, if it be when you are in dust. *The husbandman waiteth for the pre-*

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 8. [2] Hab. ii. 3.

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cious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain: be ye also patient[1]*! In due time*[2] is God's motto. He has had patience with us: let us not be impatient with Him!

[1] James v. 7, 8. [2] Rom. v. 6.

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DISCOURSE VIII.

BAPTISM.

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BAPTISM.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them.

IF we could place ourselves—but we cannot—in the position of persons visiting for the first time a Christian Church; if we could look on at home, as we might do in a heathen or Mahometan country, merely as observers and bystanders, upon the particular forms and ceremonies used in the national worship; there would be two scenes from time to time presented to us, which would strike us, I imagine, with considerable surprise.

We should notice that, on certain days, when the bulk of the congregation dispersed to their homes, a remnant, amounting sometimes to one or two hundred persons, changed

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their places for the Eastern end of the sacred building, and there, one by one, or in small companies, all devoutly kneeling, proceeded to perform an act which was to all appearance one of eating and drinking: not indeed, as it would appear from the quantity, for the satisfaction of the appetite; not certainly, as it would appear from the quality of the food, for the gratification of the palate: yet still an act of real corporeal eating, of real literal drinking, to which, judging from the mien and gesture of those concerned, something of peculiar sanctity was supposed to belong. Any foreigner, not of the Christian Faith, writing a narrative of what he saw and heard of our religious tenets and practices, would certainly judge this a fact worth recording, and would probably add some speculations of his own upon a phenomenon so simple at once and so mysterious.

On another occasion, entering the same or a like consecrated place, we should see a small group of persons surrounding a sort of elevated bason in one of the side aisles or cha-

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pels of the building; one of them holding in his arms an infant child, upon whose face, after sundry prayers and exhortations, he pours or sprinkles a little common water, uttering at the same time what we find on enquiry to be a prescribed form of words, to the exactness of which great importance is attached; after which ceremony, followed by another prayer and exhortation, the bystanders quit the Church, carrying the child with them. This custom, like the other, would give rise, in the mind of the spectator, to many curious questions. Have not these people, he might ask in the former instance, *houses to eat and to drink in*[1]? Have they not, he might enquire in the latter case, rooms at home for washing and cleansing, that they come together into the house of their God to perform such purifications? And perhaps it would scarcely surprise him to learn that some communities, professing in general the same religion, had discarded these rites, of literal eating and corporeal washing, as incon-

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 22.

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sistent with that highly spiritual character which belonged to every other part of their faith.

Now these two ceremonies, in which alone English Christians employ in their worship any outward and visible symbols—water in the one case, bread and wine in the other case—these are the two Sacraments; *that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord.*

Desiring to say a few plain words upon the former of these; and in doing so, to speak not for controversy but for peace, not for curiosity but for instruction; I begin by bidding you to look at the outward rite itself, believing that in that contemplation lies the germ of all needful doctrine as to this Sacrament which none, I suppose, will deny our Lord Jesus Christ to have practised upon earth and to have instituted for His people.

The use of water, outwardly applied, is always for cleansing. It is in this use that we have it before us. The water here is not for drinking: not therefore for the satisfying of thirst; in which case it might have sug-

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gested another line of thought and doctrine: the water here is for outward application: in other words, it is for cleansing; for that which St Peter calls plainly *the putting away of the filth of the flesh*[1].

But now this cleansing of which the water speaks, cannot be, under present circumstances, a corporeal cleansing. This Church is not the place for washing, if the body be the subject. It must mean something. It must be symbolical. The washing of the body must in this case be typical of a spiritual washing.

Here then is the first doctrine of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. The soul of man needs washing, needs cleansing from some foul defilement which lies upon it by nature. Whatever else this sacred sprinkling may mean, certainly it bears public witness to the sin, to the fall, to the spiritual ruin, of mankind. Christ will not have it left to the Pulpit to teach man's corruption: the Font has its Sermon too; and that to which the ear will

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 21.

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not listen, the eye shall attest. That water inside the Church—that washing with the water from a font (or fountain) which no Church shall be built without—is an eloquent witness to the sin-stained, sin-weakened, sin-ruined condition of man's soul and of man's being.

But that little child—what has he to do with sin? It must be a mere dream of the theologian, to conceive of that beautiful, that perfect little being, lying there asleep in the arms of its mother, as tainted already with anything that can want, or is indeed capable of, spiritual cleansing!

We can scarcely blame short-sighted man if he speaks thus. It needs faith, doubtless—and yet I will venture to say, something far short of Christian faith; only just that foresight of a very near future, which is given to every reflecting person by experience of the past; it needs that we should just be able to imagine that little infant developed into a child of four or five years, into a boy of fourteen or fifteen, into a man of forty or fifty

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years; and then we shall perceive that even in this new-born babe there dwelt by nature no good thing[1], nothing, that is, which could be trusted, apart from inward and outward influences not always to be reckoned upon, to grow up into a maturity undefiled and upright; we shall perceive that, left to himself, not good will spring forth from it but evil; in a very short time there will be tempers working there, and dispositions, and desires too, self-willed, self-indulgent, selfish continually; let alone, these will develope into faults, into sins, into vices, into crimes; let alone, that beautiful infancy will become in a few years a hell of passion first, and a hell of misery afterwards; and what man can only deplore in its fulness, God sees already in its spring. There is something, call it what you will—the Church calls it Original Sin—some flaw, some taint, some evil bias, in all that are born into this world of Adam's offspring; some influence, which, let alone, will work itself out not in good but in evil; not in holiness, not

[1] Rom. vii. 18.

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in gentleness, not in love to God and love to man, but in the opposite of these things: Christ knows this, and has taught it to His Church: and therefore it is that that little infant, ignorant as yet of evil, innocent as yet of the very power of sinning, is brought hither to be sprinkled with that lustral water which is the symbol and the type and the sacrament of cleansing.

But this water typifies something more, and more cheering, than man's need of cleansing. It is not brought into the Church, it is not exhibited in this Sacrament, to remind us, or to testify to us, of its opposite. It is not presented before us as if to say, See what you ought to be: see what you want: see what you are not and cannot be. On the contrary, the water is outpoured in that font, the water is taken out in the minister's hand, the water is sprinkled upon that infant brow, as an emblem of purification. It says to us, That which you want, that which by nature you cannot have, is here, and here for you. The blood which cleanses from guilt, the Spirit

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which cleanses from sin, it is here, it is in the Church, it is ours, it is yours. God sees that guilt which condemns, God sees that sin which paralyzes: God has provided for the one a Divine Sacrifice, God has provided for the other a Divine Life. See in this water the type of the cleansing blood: see in this water the type of the sanctifying Spirit.

And is there then no further sense in that actual immersion, pouring, or sprinkling, by which the water is brought into contact with the individual child?

This water, which typifies and represents to us purification, is here, by the command of Christ, for present use. The service of Holy Baptism is one of the two visible links between the first century and our own. This Sacrament, like the other, was instituted by Christ. He vouchsafed to leave behind Him in His Church, not the word only of His promise, but the sign and seal also, to the very senses, of His presence. Every time that a Baptism takes place in this Church, it is a

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commemoration of His redeeming work and a remembrance of His resurrection life.

It says to us, What Christ did for the world, He did for the world of all time. His Redemption is not worn out: it has upon it still the very *dew of its youth*[1]; all the vigour and all the freshness and all the lustre of its original revelation to be the light of the world.

And it says again, What Christ did for the world, He did for the individual. This cleansing from guilt, this cleansing from sin, is not to be looked at, is not to be talked about; it is to be appropriated, to be grasped, to be lived by. The *fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*[2] is not to be contemplated, admired, or adored; it is to be applied to, it is to be drawn from, it is to be washed in.

And it says again, What Christ did for mankind, He did not only for all generations, and not only for each individual, but for every age of every man; for the whole and each

[1] Psalm cx. 3. [2] Zech. xiii. 1.

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part of life; for the *infant of days*[1], no less than for the man of ripe years or of hoar hairs. *The openness of this ordinance*, it has been well said, *to the unconscious babe, who hath no righteousness, nor faculty of any kind for receiving any; who can work no work, set forth no prayer, and act no faith...is the clearest demonstration in the world of the freeness of Divine grace, and the willingness of the Father to bestow the Holy Spirit upon any age and upon all ages of human life*[2].

Ill do they, in our Church's judgment, who deny the Sacrament of Baptism to young children. We will not say that they intentionally *forbid the little children to come*[3] to Christ. They may design quite otherwise. They would train them, it may be, for a more intelligent confession, when reason shall be matured, when faith shall be realized. They would postpone this solemn service till it can be one of intelligent self-dedication, following upon conscious conversion, and warranting a

[1] Isaiah lxv. 20.

[2] *Collected Writings of Edward Irving*, Vol. II. p. 377.

[3] Matt. xix. 14.

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consecrated life. If we had only human reasonings to guide us, we might almost say even as they. But they have against them all these things.

First, no inconsiderable weight of Scripture testimony.

When we read there of the Baptism of whole families; Lydia *and her household*[1]; the Philippian jailer, *he and all his*[2]; the *household of Stephanas*[3], baptized by St Paul at Corinth; what probability is there that in these whole families there were no children?

When we remember that it was the practice of the Jews to baptize the children of proselytes with their parents, was it likely that no caution should be added (had such been Christ's purpose) against continuing this practice under the Gospel?

When we remember that God's earlier sacrament of Circumcision, by which admission was given into the Church and commonwealth of Israel, was administered, by solemn

[1] Acts xvi. 15. [2] Acts xvi. 33. [3] 1 Cor. i. 16.

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order, on the eighth day from the birth[1]; could it be but that Apostles, Israelites themselves, would so understand and so minister the sacrament of Christian incorporation, unless it were otherwise positively ordered?

And when St Paul speaks to the Corinthians, of the children of even one Christian parent as being themselves (in a certain sense) *holy*[2], can we doubt that he did so interpret and so apply the command to *go and baptize all the nations*, as to make it embrace, not adults only, but children, within its pale?

And although we read, here and there, in the writings of early Christian fathers, discussions as to the exact age most proper for Baptism; yet even these will be found, on examination, first, to presuppose the practice of Infant Baptism as the custom and rule of the Churches; and secondly, with scarcely an exception, to refer not to the question between Adult and Infant Baptism, but only to the precise point and moment of infancy—

[1] Gen. xvii. 12. [2] 1 Cor. vii. 14.

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between the eighth day and the second or third year, for example, of childhood—at which Baptism might be best applied. In fact, it appears to have been almost a thousand years from the beginning of the Gospel, before one congregation of opponents of Infant Baptism was avowedly formed in the Church of Christ[1].

Few points in Christian history are more strongly attested than this, that *the Baptism of young children* was the primitive, the Apostolical practice, and is *most agreeable*, as our 27th Article expresses it, *with the institution of Christ.*

But now—for this is the great question—what is Baptism? Has it any effect at all—and, if any, what effect—upon those who are subjected to it, whether in youth or age?

The Church has been torn with controversies on this simple, this elementary subject. Often, we think, for lack of a little

[1] See a careful and candid statement of the whole question, in Dr Hey's *Lectures in Divinity*, Book IV. Art. XXVII. Sect. 14.

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mutual explanation: the definition of one or two terms, the statement of one or two principles, would have marvellously helped the settlement.

Does any one doubt that a Sacrament of Christ's institution must have some meaning and some efficacy? If Christ said, *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*[1], can it be right, is it even reverent, to treat Baptism as a shadow, as a phantom, as a nullity?

This on the one side.

Then, on the other, does any one seriously suppose that the most earnest champion of the highest view of Baptism intends to represent it as absolutely securing salvation? as warranting a person for heaven, whatever be his life? Candour and charity alike forbid such an imputation. The most eager Sacramentalist cannot mean this: the most vehement Spiritualist cannot mean the other. All Christians must ascribe some value to Baptism: no Christian can make it a guarantee of salvation.

[1] Mark xvi. 16.

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Between these two uttermost limits there is scope for variety: but need there be variance?

Certainly Scripture warns us against all exaggerations of the importance of ritual. We are never to assign to outward forms a power which belongs only to grace and to the Spirit. This principle is of the very essence of the Gospel.

On the other hand, language is used in Scripture concerning Baptism, which cannot be overlooked, and which ought not to be disparaged. *Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*[1]. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death*[2]. *As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*[3]. *The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us*[4]. *Having our hearts sprinkled from*

[1] Acts ii. 38.
[2] Rom. vi. 3, 4.
[3] Gal. iii. 27.
[4] 1 Pet. iii. 21.

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an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water[1].

Let us gather, if it be possible, one or two certain inferences from the fact of the institution, and from the Scripture doctrine, of Baptism.

First, and beyond all question, Baptism is the appointed way of entrance into the Church of Christ. An unbaptized person is not yet a member, as Apostles understood that phrase, of the Christian body. When, for example, Philip the Evangelist was sent to teach the Ethiopian stranger the true doctrine of Him who is our Peace, it is quite plain that he instructed him in the binding condition of this Sacrament; insomuch that the first question of the convinced man was, *What doth hinder me to be baptized?* And he waited to ask this question, until he could say also, *See, here is water*[2]. He did not consider Baptism to mean a merely spiritual process: he waited till he came to a piece of water, and then he stopped the chariot. In

[1] Heb. x. 22. [2] Acts viii. 36.

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like manner, when the company which Cornelius had gathered in his house, to listen to the Divine Gospel of the Apostle Peter, had already received the manifest communication of the Holy Spirit, still the question of the Apostle was, *Can any man forbid water?* even the spiritual grace did not supersede or set aside the outward visible sign: *and he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord*[1]. Baptism is the way into the Church, the gate of entrance, the door of the Christian temple. Therefore, whatsoever there is inside; whatsoever there is, in the Christian body, of privilege, of instruction, of ordinance, of grace; is reached in this way, and (speaking generally) in none other.

This does not oblige us to answer the question, what God may be pleased to do, of His great and unpromised mercy, in exceptional ways; as where there is no opportunity of receiving this Sacrament—where (as our Church bids us say) it cannot be had[2]; or

[1] Acts x. 47, 48.

[2] Exhortation in the Service for Adult Baptism: *Whereby ye may perceive the great necessity of this Sacrament, where it may be had.*

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where there is some such prejudice or prepossession against the form of Baptism as amounts, for the child or the grown person, to a virtual prohibition: these things do not much disturb us, because we have an unbounded confidence in the Divine justice, which lies so far above and so far beneath human calculation: our business is with the positive, not with the negative; with the general, not with the exceptional; with our own duty, not with others' omissions or (if it be so) others' faults.

We say then with confidence, that through this little wicket gate—this ordinance of washing with water in the name of the Holy Trinity—lies the ordinary entrance for a fallen being, in youth or in age, into that Holy Catholic Church which Christ established on earth, and in which, though not personally in every single member of which, the Spirit of Christ works and dwells.

The extreme simplicity and (if I may so say) facility of the ordinance does not, in our eyes, make it at all less indicative of the

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hand and of the institution of Christ. *If the Prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean*[1]*!*

There is this also. We desire to say only such things as all believing persons can assent to. There may be more than this—there is doubtless more—in the Sacrament, but we will keep to that about which there can scarcely be question. And therefore we say, secondly, *Baptism is the appropriation of Redemption to the individual person.* That which God has done for the world, He here seals upon the soul. He takes aside the little child, or (if it be so) the grown man, presented in His House to receive the Sacrament of inauguration, and says to him, *That which I have done in Christ for mankind, I have done for thee. I here seal thee and mark thee for my own. Henceforth I bid thee believe thyself to be called and adopted and forgiven and justified. Henceforth I bid thee to*

[1] 2 Kings v. 13.

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regard thyself as my son, and to call upon me day by day as thy Father and thy God in Christ Jesus.

Will any one despise this? any one who knows himself? any one who has had any converse or any commerce with human life and human conscience? Is it nothing that God should have said to me individually, what He says (no doubt) sufficiently elsewhere to all men? Is it nothing that He Himself should have come in where I was, and promised to me separately that which I knew already that He had promised collectively to all? Is there nothing in the appropriation, but what lay already in the proclamation?

Suppose—and here again I quote a few sentences from a great man long fallen on sleep[1]—*that to the parents, while yet the joy over their new-born babe was fresh, and they had called their friends to rejoice along with them, into the joyful company the sovereign of the land should enter, and, looking upon the*

[1] *Collected Writings of Edward Irving*, Vol. II. pages 266—268.

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child, declare towards it a dear and tender attachment, should take it in his arms and bless it: that of itself were an honour to make the parents happy, and talk of while they live. But suppose, further, that the gracious sovereign should declare that he would provide for their child in royal style; that he would make for it a mansion in his royal palace, and a seat beside his royal person, and carefully watch over it, as if it were his own, during the years of its youth; that, when it arrived at maturity, he would take it to himself, make for it a coronet of honour, and bestow upon it a royal domain... say that, in proof of all this, he should take from his bosom a writing wherein it was all written, signed with his own hand, sealed with the great seal of his kingdom, and to make it doubly sacred, endorsed with writing of his own blood...suppose such a thing to happen to the humblest family of the land...how would the hearts of those parents be filled with indescribable gladness, how would they call upon their friends to rejoice with them, how would they pray for long life to the honoured child, and

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carefully rear him up for his distinguished inheritance! They would tell him of the high intention: they would stimulate him to be worthy of it: it would be the one idea, the master-thought of his mind, the pole-star of all his course. And yet the fulfilment of the promise is crossed with many conditions. The child may die in his youth...the child may disobey the laws, and render himself incapable of the honour: he may be banished to foreign parts: he may be put to a violent death for his crimes: he may, like Absalom, take arms, and rebel against his more than father: but none of these conditions, I will venture to say, would ever cross the threshold of their fears, so as to trouble the fulness of joy with which they received so great, so unexpected, so undeserved a boon from their prince. They would not ask, that, besides going to the extent of his royal prerogative, he should abrogate the laws for the sake of their child; that he should not only crown him, but, out of weak favouritism, suspend the process of law, and allow all things to run into disorder. Such presumptuous thoughts

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would never enter into the most ungrateful mind on the reception of such a gift.

Such, he proceeds, *such, parents, is the similitude: and the interpretation is plain. Your child, born in the meanest, most abject condition in the universe of God...the Son of God, the Saviour of men, taketh, and with the waters of baptism washeth. These waters are His own precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot. He taketh your shipwrecked child from his nativity, cleanseth him for heaven, prepareth for him a mansion, and a crown that fadeth not away. But He doth not abrogate the law of holiness, by which heaven is kept blessed, and without which heaven were like this earth, hardly worth the enjoying: the blessing consisteth in making salvation possible; in making it certain, through the obedience of faith and the regeneration of the Spirit. So that a duty is implicated with the gift, and the gift is the stimulus to the duty.*

Now to this personal admission into Christ's Church, to this individual appropriation of Christ's Redemption, our Church gives the

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solemn name of Regeneration, or a new birth. It was the name, I believe, by which Jews called their baptism. It is a name expressive of some great change; some change great enough to justify its comparison with the first entrance of a new-born babe into the world of sensation and action. And is it not a great change, which takes a man out of the world of heathenism, out of the world of nature and of the fallen Adam, and makes him an inmate of the world of grace and the Gospel? Is it not a great change—a change great enough to justify the application to it of so great a name? Compare, if you have the knowledge to make the comparison—compare the condition of man as he is in an idolatrous country, with the condition of man as he is in an evangelized and Christianized nation; and you will see why the transition should be called a regeneration. It was the name given by a Jew to the effect of the baptism of the proselyte. It was the name given by the heathen himself to any event of extraordinary joy and blessing which befell him; a deliverance from

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death, a return from exile. May it not be given, as our Church of England gives it, to the admission of a new member into the body of Christ? *Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks to Almighty God for these benefits.* Put in no conditions; insert no *If* where the Church and the Bible write none; believe only, and surely it shall not be in vain, that the entrance of an Adam creature into Christ's new creation, is indeed a birth into a new being, is indeed a life from the dead.

And do we then make void by such language the doctrine of Repentance, of Conversion, of a spiritual change, of a renovation and revolution of life? If this child, now admitted by Baptism into the Church of Christ, shall afterwards prove himself false to his high calling; if he goes astray into the by-paths of sensuality, of irreligion, of infidelity, of sin; if he walks not with Christ, but follows the vain traditions of a world still lying in wickedness; shall he need the less—

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shall he not all the more need—that second regeneration which is the conversion of the soul? And does Baptism exclude this, or make it needless, by taking beforehand its great name? Does it not rather contain in itself the pledge and the promise of every such regeneration, even by sealing upon the soul that assurance of grace, of which every later manifestation is the fulfilment and the verification?

Christian parents! claim betimes for your children a place and a home in God's family, in Christ's Church, below! Bring them early to the font of holy Baptism; dedicate them there to your Saviour; ask His blessing, expect His grace for them: then take them back to your homes, as children whom God has given you[1]; as Christ's little ones, as partakers of the covenant, as heirs of the kingdom. The Church says to you—One greater than the Church says to you—*Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages*[2]. Teach them the laws of the

[1] Isaiah viii. 18. [2] Exod. ii. 9.

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kingdom: set before them its glories: foster in them its powers. If they sin—and *there is no man that sinneth not*[1]—restore them, patient in hope, as those on whom there rests still the seal and impress of the adoption. If you follow them early to the grave, lay them to that long sleep in hope. He who came after them into this world—He who took them for His own when they knew Him not, before they asked after Him—will not fail them now. He takes them to Himself *from the evil to come*[2]. See that in all things you go before and follow them, as patterns of holiness, as disciples of the Holy One!

Christian worshippers! sealed, all of you, in days of unconscious infancy, or later, with the mark and sign of regeneration, live your Baptism! It *represents to us our profession:* it assures us of our sonship: it witnesses to us of our glory. If any of you be baptized and yet not communicants, see your shame and your sin! The Sacrament of the Life should lead on to the Sacrament of the Sustentation.

[1] 1 Kings viii. 46. [2] Isaiah lvii. 1.

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If you are not apostates from Christ, you ought to be living in Him: you ought to be seizing eagerly every means of access, every opportunity of converse. The Church bids you welcome: shut not out yourselves! Doubt ye not concerning yourselves, but believe earnestly, that yours is every right, every comfort, all the strength and all the blessedness, which is to be found in Christ Jesus. *Stir up the gift of God which is in you*[1]. The redemption which Christ made in Death, He appropriated to you in Baptism, and He will consummate in you in Resurrection. His you are, His twice and thrice: be ye His in will and in affection; His on earth, His in Heaven; His in grace, and His in glory. *Buried with Him in Baptism*[2], with Him rise, with Him live, with Him reign! *Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more...Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*[3].

[1] 2 Tim. i. 6. [2] Col. ii. 12.
[3] Rom. vi. 9, 11.

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DISCOURSE IX.

COMMUNION.

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COMMUNION.

MATTHEW XXVI. 26, 28.

This is my body... This is my blood.

THE Gospel is a spiritual religion. Its first maxim is, *God is a Spirit*[1].

And its second maxim is, *They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit*[2].

And its third maxim is, *It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing*[3].

And so on, through the whole round of its doctrines and its exhortations.

And yet, wheresoever this Gospel, this altogether spiritual Religion, is preached throughout the whole world, there are brought with it,

[1] John iv. 24. [2] Ibid. [3] John vi. 63.

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and regarded and treated as parts of it, two institutions, at first sight of a most unspiritual, a most sensuous character.

Of one of these two exceptions we have spoken: of the laver of water, and the sacred washing therein. Of the other we would speak now.

On certain days there is the appearance in the Church of a table spread with a white cloth, as if for a meal. On that table, when the time comes, are set a plate of bread and flagon of wine. And then, with many marks of peculiar solemnity—the kneeling posture the bent head, the shaded face—the singular hush of silence, broken only by the repetition in the lowest tones, to each person, of a particular form of words—there follows an act process of eating and drinking: each worshipper receives and eats a morsel of common bread; each worshipper receives and drinks few drops of common wine.

This is that act which we have now interpret. Let us begin with this simplest obvious view of it. These persons

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houses elsewhere *to eat and to drink in*[1]; and yet they are here eating and drinking in the Congregation, in the place of solemn assembly, as the crown and consummation of their most earnest worship. *What mean ye by this service*[2]*?*

Look first at that which the eye notices.

Bread, the Psalmist says, *strengthens*, and *wine makes glad, the heart of man*[3]. To eat bread and to drink wine is to strengthen and refresh the body. But that eating and drinking which is a part of the holy and spiritual Gospel; that eating and drinking which is done in the Church, where everything is profane which is not spiritual; must have something to do with benefit to the soul. It must be designed, first, to show the soul's need of strengthening and refreshing; and secondly, to point out some way of strengthening and refreshing the soul; and thirdly, to apply and make use of (here, and now) that mode of

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 22. [2] Exod. xii. 26.
[3] Psalm civ. 15.

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strengthening and refreshing which it thus tells of and represents.

And two things besides, before we go deeper. This eating and drinking, which plainly has respect to the soul, is not done by each person independently of all others. There is evidently something in it of society and of companionship. They are not endeavouring to forget one another: they are endeavouring to remember, to remind themselves of, one another. This meal is partaken of in common. Clearly there is something in this soul's refreshment and strengthening, which has to do, not with the self-life, but with the common and corporate life, of Christians. Keep that as the second testimony of the eye to the meaning of this service.

And the third is this. It is quite plain, from their posture and demeanour, that these persons believe themselves to be eating and drinking with a Superior; with One whom they greatly reverence; whom they approach with the utmost devotion, with every sign of submission, adoration, and awe. There is a

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table: and it is spread as for a meal: and the guests are many: and they eat and they drink, every one, actually and really: still it is not with the freedom of equals, nor even with the respectful manner of subjects dining with their sovereign: it is more yet than this: there is some One present, at whose hands even common food must be taken kneeling.

Interest and enquiry being thus awakened; the eye having been examined and cross-examined, to the utmost limit of its knowledge, as to the meaning of this exceptional act of worship; history is next questioned concerning its antiquity and its origin. And on no point does history return a plainer or more unequivocal answer.

This ordinance, of the eating and the drinking, is traced backwards, in an unbroken chain of testimony, for at least eighteen hundred years. The account given of it, go as far back as you will—ask the friends, or ask the enemies, of the Gospel—is always one and the same. It is the perpetual ob-

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servance of a scene witnessed once in Jerusalem: it is the perpetual commemoration of an event which founded Christianity: it is the perpetual carrying out of a direction uttered once by the living voice of a Man, who declared Himself to be about to die for man's sin, *to give His life a ransom for many*[1].

And if we wish to interpret to ourselves the symbols here before us; if we desire to understand the meaning of this ordinance, and to obey with the mind as well as the heart the last request of a then dying but now living Lord; we must transport ourselves, in memory and thought, to that upper chamber in which this Sacrament was instituted; to the occasion on which, and the circumstances amidst which, and the very words in which, our Master and only Saviour bade His disciples to do this through all time in remembrance of Him.

He who came *to fulfil all righteousness*[2], to keep every part of God's Law both as our

[1] Matt. xx. 28. Mark x. 45. [2] Matt. iii. 15.

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Redeemer and as our Example, had shown particular anxiety, this last year of His life, about the observance, with His disciples, of the Paschal Supper. He who had no house of His own, had yet hearts enough at His command to be sure of His guestchamber. And you all know how He found it; and with what earnestness of feeling, when evening arrived, He sat down there with the Twelve. *With desire have I desired*, He said to them, *to eat this Passover with you before I suffer*[1]. It was evidently His purpose—may we not say so? to mark strongly the connection between that Passover and His Passion. Israel's redemption from Egypt, He would say to them, was the intended type of man's redemption, through a Saviour's sacrifice, from his house of bondage, which is sin and death.

Such was the occasion. It was at the Paschal Supper that Christ instituted His own. And He marked the two as type and antitype. Whatever else may be the Sacra-

[1] Luke xxii. 15.

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ment of the Supper, certainly it is the commemoration of Redemption.

And now for the circumstances. It is the last night of His life. *The same night in which He was betrayed.* And He knows it. His every tone, His every look, bespeaks it. There is a tenderness, and a pathos, and a solemnity, and a love, even beyond the common. The disciples feel, even without words, that something is impending; that He is going away; that it is a farewell meal. He tells them that He shall never celebrate another Passover. He tells them that He is going. He warns them of some strong temptation into which all are entering. Satan has desired them—*begged you,* is the exact expression—begged them of God, as once in old time the Patriarch of patience[1]—that he may sift them as wheat. Christ has prayed, He says, in behalf of one of them, the weakest because the most self-reliant, that his faith fail not finally: when he is converted—for a fall there is to be—let him set himself,

[1] Job i. 11, 12. ii. 5, 6.

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through life, unto death, to strengthen his brethren[1].

These are specimens—we have no time for more—of what formed the conversation at that momentous farewell meal. And just one thing more. At that first *Last Supper*, as always everywhere since, there was a false disciple lurking among the true. Christ knew it, and it troubled Him. It caused Him the first outburst, at the table, of that exceeding grief, that sorrow unto death, which was to overwhelm Him afterwards in the Garden and on the Cross. *He was troubled in spirit, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me*[2].

Such was the occasion, such were the circumstances: what were the words? *As they were eating, He took the bread*, the loaf lying before Him, *and after blessing it*, after giving thanks over it to Him who created bread for man's use, and who was now about to turn it to a new, a spiritual purpose, *He brake it*, broke the loaf into fragments, *and gave to*

[1] Luke xxii. 31, 32. [2] John xiii. 21.

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the disciples, and said, Take ye, eat ye: this is my body. St Luke adds, *which is being* (*on the point of being*) *given for you.* St Paul, *which is being* (*on the point of being*) *broken,* like this bread, *for you.* Both St Luke and St Paul, *This do ye in remembrance of me;* literally, *unto my recollection.*

In like manner afterwards *He took the cup, and after giving thanks,* as before over the bread, *He gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you: for this is my blood of the new*[1] *testament* (or *dispensation*), *which is being* (*on the point of being*) *poured out for many unto remission of sins.* St Luke and St Paul say, *This cup is the new testament* (or *dispensation*) *in my blood.* And St Paul's record adds further, *This do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me*[2].

Gather up these sayings—reported, with some little variety, in four places of Scripture—and what do they amount to?

[1] The word *new* is omitted, in Matt. xxvi. 28, by some chief manuscripts.

[2] Matt. xxvi. 26—28. Mark xiv. 22—24. Luke xxii. 19—21. 1 Cor. xi. 23—25.

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Christ says of the bread in His hand, *This is my body.* The body was there, holding the bread. The two were distinct. The one held, handled, and handed on, the other. There was no transubstantiation there. The bread was bread, bread still, when the hand passed it on. That is one remark. There was no risk at that time of the disciples deifying the bread. It was not Christ. Christ was there in the body, and the hand of Christ's body gave them the bread. Strange that such superstitions should ever have found lodgment! They could not have done so, had men gone back to the guest-chamber. But the temptation was too strong for human nature. To be able to present to themselves the actual human body, the body which hung upon the Cross, the body which rose again from death, this was delightful to the imagination: this was found stimulative to piety: this was productive, in some hearts, of reverence, of self-control, of increased abhorrence and avoidance of evil. To have Christ so near to them, even in the flesh, this

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made up to them for the loss (as they deemed it) of being severed from Him by many centuries in the body. O for some voice, not of man, to whisper in such ears the very words of Christ Himself, *The flesh*, if it were the flesh of Jesus, *profiteth nothing!* To eat the very flesh, to drink the very blood, of One so dear and so Divine, would be worse than profitless: it would be shocking, it would be horrible, it would be savage. *The flesh profiteth nothing: it is the spirit that quickeneth.*

The temptation was strong to human piety. Many devout hearts have fallen into it; and inasmuch as the heart was devout, the error was more of the intellect than of the soul. From early times language has been held concerning this Sacrament, as our own Church's Homily testifies[1], which (strictly

[1] *Homily of the Worthy Receiving*, &c. Part I. *The ancient Catholic Fathers.....were not afraid to call this Supper, some of them, the salve of immortality and sovereign preservative against death; other, a deifical communion; other, the sweet dainties of our Saviour, the pledge of eternal health, the defence of faith, the hope of the resurrection; other, the food of immortality, the healthful grace, and the conservatory to everlasting life.*

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interpreted) would almost favour such superstitions. But it was the language of fervour, of devotion, of pious thankfulness; not intended for the reasoning of logicians, or the definition of theologians. As such, if exaggerated, it was devout: if inaccurate, it was harmless.

We cannot say this of all high doctrine (as it is called) upon the subject of this Sacrament. The temptation which was strong to piety was stronger to sacerdotalism. That it should be given to man, instrumentally, by hand and tongue, to create God; to turn common bread and common wine, by a few movements of the hand, and a few utterances of the lips, into the very body and blood of Him who made the worlds; this was the keystone of that arch of priestly domination which once bestrode the world: it was this which made possible the public sale of indulgences and the domestic tyranny of the confessional: it was this which drew the life-blood of our English martyrs, who felt that its overthrow was worth the dying for: it is

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this which English innovators, calling themselves restorers, would now bring back upon us—from whose errors, or follies, or impostures, call them which you will, may God preserve evermore His true, His faithful, His Apostolical Church of England!

The time seems to demand of us this protest. But even as we utter it, we misgive ourselves, lest we should be encouraging a forgetfulness, or disparagement, or explaining away, of those words which stand in all the records of the institution, *This is my body.*

Just as Christ said of Himself, *I am the true Vine*[1]*; I am the Door*[2]*; I am the bright and morning Star*[3]*;* just as He said of Himself, in terms more exactly analogous to those here before us, *I am the bread of life*[4]*;* so here He says, *This thing is my body...This cup is my blood.*

Not literally. If it were so meant, Christ would not say, *This cup,* but, *This wine.* Still less would He say, as St Luke and St

[1] John xv. 1. [2] John x. 9.
[3] Rev. xxii. 16. [4] John vi. 35.

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Paul give it, *This cup is the new testament.* If something is to be literal, let all be literal. If the blood is literal, let the cup be literal. If the blood is literal, let the testament (dispensation) be literal. We must not thus play fast and loose with sacred words. But rather let us say this, with solemn truth: It is not they who literalize who really exalt. It is not they who transubstantiate who really elevate. It is not they who make the bread literal flesh, or the wine literal blood, who really enhance *the dignity of that holy mystery.* Anything spiritual ranks higher than anything carnal. The very smallest influx of grace into the soul is a far higher thing, essentially, than the closest access to the most sacred form of flesh. Pharisees saw upon earth, Roman soldiers handled on earth, the literal Body, and were nothing profited. Thus to deify the sensible is to go back from the glory of grace and of the Spirit. It is to degrade that Sacrament which it professes to honour, and to do despite to that Holy Spirit who is now the only Represent-

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ative, the very Presence, of Christ our Lord below.

This is my body...This is my blood. So then the first doctrine of the words is this:—

The bread represents to us Christ's body: the wine represents to us Christ's blood.

When the Table is spread for Holy Communion, that should be the first thought. He who grasps this has done something. Not all, but something. That bread, that wine, are to remind me of Christ dying for me. Observe the severance of the blood from the body. That marks death. Observe the breaking of the bread. That marks the torturing, the mangling, the rending and tearing, of the body of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Observe the pouring out of the wine. That marks the shedding of the blood; the piercing of the hands and the side, out of which flowed the very blood which is the life. As I gaze upon the preparations for my sacred feast, I gaze upon the representation of my Saviour's dying love. And the very least thing which I do, as I approach that Table,

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and place myself before it as its humblest unworthiest guest, is, to express my faith in that Death which is our Life; my conviction that *by one offering of Himself once offered He made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.* By approaching that Table, I *show*, as St Paul says—more exactly, I *announce—the Lord's death*[1]. I say to myself, *That body was given, that blood was shed, for thee.* I say to others, my companions in that blessed feast, *That body was given, that blood was shed, for you.* O doubt it not! If your faith is weak, if the flame of your devotion is burning low, let the contagion of another's strengthen and kindle it! *As often as ye eat that bread, and drink that cup, ye do show* (*announce*) *the Lord's death.*

But all this might be if we but gazed upon that Table; if it were but a *lying in state* of those sacred emblems; if it were but an exhibition, and representation to the eye, of the crucified body, of the outpoured blood.

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 26.

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That bread is for eating: that wine is for drinking.

Here therefore there opens before us another whole reach and region of the Divine mystery; one which tells of something beyond commemoration, beyond the mere Eucharistic offering of faith and praise; even the need of a personal appropriation of those Divine realities, for the strengthening and refreshing of the secret soul.

Thus the sixth Chapter of the Gospel according to St John becomes the very Sermon of the Sacrament: explaining its sacred symbols; warning us against carnalizing and sensualizing its divine doctrine; bidding us rather to see in this eating and drinking, a representation by sign and symbol, as that Chapter represents in word and language, how the life of man's soul is maintained and reinvigorated; namely, by perpetual converse and communion with Christ crucified and Christ risen, by the very present help and influence of the Holy Spirit. That bread is not to be gazed upon: it is to be partaken

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of. That wine is not to be contemplated only: it is to be received, it is to be drunk. Therefore it tells me that it is not enough to believe at a distance in what Christ did and suffered; not enough to say, not enough to feel, *He died for me:* I must draw near; I must come close to Him; I must speak to Him, and He to me—O, more, far more, than this! I must take Him into me: I must, as He says Himself, eat Him and drink Him[1]; receive Him into my very being, as crucified for me and for me risen, by a faith which not only contemplates but apprehends, not only appropriates but assimilates, not only discerns but digests Him!

Alas! many believe, for one who draws nigh. Many trust in His sacrifice at a distance, for one who feasts upon it in the soul for healing, for invigoration, for life.

There is this one thing more. The Sacrament of the Supper is not only a commemoration of Christ's Death, and not only an instruction as to the nature of the Christian

[1] John vi. 57.

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life; it is also, in the strictest sense of the words, *a means of grace;* an opportunity, that is, of actually exercising and fostering that life, the nature of which it reveals.

What saith the Scripture?

The cup of blessing which we bless—and St Paul is speaking of the Sacrament of the Supper—*is it not the communion*, an actual partaking, *of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break*, in that ordinance, *is it not the communion*, an actual partaking, *of the body of Christ*[1]*? Take, eat*, Christ says, *this is my body. Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood. Feed on Him in thy heart*, such is the address to each worshipper in the very moment of receiving, *by faith with thanksgiving.* Yes, be assured of this, that it is in the holy Sacrament of the last Supper, if anywhere below, that the true Christian man draws near to Christ; and not only draws near to Him, as alone he can, spiritually and by faith, but also receives Him into himself, as the Bread of Life, for the strengthening

[1] 1 Cor. x. 16.

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and edifying and comforting of his soul. It is not only as a commemoration of the Sacrifice, and it is not only as a revelation of the Life; it is also, and above all, for present actual communion with the crucified and risen Saviour, that all Christian people visit the Holy Table in health, and call for it in sickness and in the approach of death. It is because that which Christ instituted, He instituted not for His sake but for ours; instituted to be a means of grace; instituted to be (in other words) a communication of help and strength to those whom first He has redeemed by His Death and quickened by His Resurrection. So seek, so use it—desire this, ask this, expect this, and take no denial—and you too shall find the true table prepared for you again and again in this wilderness[1]: you shall eat and drink of that which is not carnal but spiritual, and go forward *in the strength of that meat* towards *the mount of God*[2], towards the home of your rest and of your inheritance.

[1] Psalm lxxviii. 19. [2] 1 Kings xix. 8.

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In the early days of the Church this Sacrament was the possession of all the baptized. The question arose not then, Shall I commemorate, shall I communicate, shall I eat of Christ's bread, shall I drink of Christ's wine—or shall I forbear? The uncovering of that Table was not then a signal for the dispersion of the Congregation. It was one part of the daily office: for very, very long it was one part of the Sunday worship: and they who turned away from it did so as a chastisement, as a punishment: it was a mark of exclusion, of forfeited privilege, of judicial excommunication. As Baptism is the Sacrament of the Regeneration, so is this the Sacrament of the Life. The one, of the giving of the life; the other, of its sustentation. As soon would a man have thought then of giving hunger as a reason for not eating, as of urging unworthiness as a plea why he should not communicate.

Alas! all this is gone by and done with. You will say, Baptism and Christianity have parted company: we must have a new test

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of sincerity—and this shall be Communion. If people will bring infants to Baptism as a form without meaning; if Christian parents (so called) recognize no tie of duty in the education of their baptized and Christened offspring; if men and women, careless, worldly, unbelieving, sinful, will flock together to worship—or (more probably still) to hear Sermons—making all these things a nullity and a mockery; we must find some other barrier to keep out the false—and that shall be Communion. We will regard that, we will represent that, as something very awful; something which it is profanation to touch, save for the few: we will fling wide the gate of Baptism, and the gate of preaching, and the gate of worship; we will lock and bar the gate of Communion and of the Supper. Now I will not deny that some benefit may have attended this arbitrary distinction, this human expedient of compensation. It was well, perhaps, that one ordinance should be kept comparatively clean; should be treated with a reverence lost and denied to others. It was well—and it was not well.

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It was well, if it awakened anxiety: it was well, if it led to *great searchings of heart*[1]: it was well, when it made a man question himself as to his Christianity, and resolve to be no longer a disciple of Christ by compromises and by halves. It was not well, when it made the few pride themselves upon admission, or when it made the many acquiesce in exclusion. It was not well when it calmed men's consciences because they worshipped, and roused no fears in them because they did not communicate. It was not well, when it led to whole lives being lived, decently and unreproached, in a glimmering twilight of Christianity, and ended, on a tolerably tranquil deathbed, with a first (or without even a first) application for that Sacrament which Christ ordained as a perpetual means of grace *until His coming again*[2].

And still it is thus in every Congregation. Still, year after year, worshippers come and go—work and rest, enjoy and suffer, sicken and die—who never become communicants.

[1] Judges v. 16.

[2] *Prayer of Consecration.* See 1 Cor. xi. 26.

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They will admit it as a duty; they read it in the New Testament too plainly to deny that; they hear Sermons upon it, they themselves sing Hymns concerning it—still they turn away. They are not worthy—who is worthy? Communion is not a profession of attainment: how often shall we say it? it is a means of grace. There is something which they must do first: this anxiety must be put away, that duty must be performed, oftentimes some one else must be different, and then they will come: O how foolish! how ignorant! how perverse! How hopeless, too, is this arguing! We have heard it ten thousand times: ten thousand times we think it is answered: but no: when it comes to the point, it is too strong for us still. Still, if life be prolonged; still, as during seven years, so during seventy times seven, men will be seen, by those who come after, worshipping regularly in the Church, yet never communicating; or communicating once or twice or thrice, in a year or in a lifetime, as though the food of the soul could be eaten for a year or for a lifetime in one meal, or as if the

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Sacrament of the Sustentation were a mere *viaticum* of the magician!

May Almighty God direct some minds to a deep pondering of the subject, and open some hearts to its reception and to its decision! May He keep us alike from the sin of coming hastily and of refusing obstinately! May He add in every place, by any instrumentality which shall please Him—whether the instrumentality of Ordinance or of Providence, of Word or Sacrament, of blessing or chastening—to the number of those who realize the description given of old of the true Church of His saved ones—

No more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God...Built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone: In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit[1]*!*

[1] Eph. ii. 19—22.

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DISCOURSE X.

ORDINATION.

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ORDINATION.

LUKE XXIV. 49.

But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

AT one particular point in the Ordination Service, the Congregation are desired, *secretly in their prayers,* to make their humble supplications to God for the accomplishment of the good and holy purposes avowed by the persons about to be ordained: *for the which prayers* (it is added) *there shall be silence kept for a space.* At the close of it, that touching Hymn of the Church, the *Veni Creator,* expresses in sound, what the foregoing pause expressed in silence, and invokes that help from above without which no one

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good resolution is worth the effort which it demands.

That pause is impressive in itself, and it is significant of a great reality.

The mighty works of God, whether as recorded in Scripture, or as witnessed in the world, are ever prefaced by pauses. Of all of them, as of one, might the words be written, *When He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in Heaven by the space of half an hour*[1]. Man, measuring his brief time by years and days, is impatient to be doing: God, with whom a thousand years are as one day, can afford to prepare for action. And they who have most nearly approached God in their life on earth, have been constrained to learn from Him this lesson.

Why should Moses have been detained in the mount forty days and forty nights, when nothing was to be brought thence but two tables of stone and the pattern of a sanctuary[2]? Why, when the first tables had been broken, in the grief and shame of the

[1] Rev. viii. 1. [2] Exod. xxiv. 18.

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Lawgiver for the sin of his people, was yet another period of equal duration to be spent by him in the mount before those first tables could be replaced by the second[1]? Why, in later days of rebuke and blasphemy, must the representative of the Prophets consume an equal portion of the brief span of life in seeking the presence of God afar off in the wilderness[2]? Surely, because God measures not the waste of time as we do: because of all His works the most glorious and the most permanent are wrought not suddenly but with preparation: because there must be in all who would serve Him a heart made ready as well as a life devoted: because, though there is no time for us to squander, there is time enough to employ, and of all employments that is the most useful which is the equipment for usefulness.

And when God Himself vouchsafed to come in human form upon the earth, there was the same experience over and over again realized. Why that long season of silence

[1] Exod. xxxiv. 28. [2] 1 Kings xix. 8.

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and obscurity, through which our Lord passed to a very short season of speech and action? Why those thirty years[1] of childhood, of boyhood, of youth, of early manhood, during which He was as others are in all save sin—years of growth and of ripening, mental and bodily, of duties common to man, and of occupations humbler than our own? And when at last the hour of His manifestation approached, why, once again, those long forty days in the wilderness, of company with wild beasts and of conflict with the tempter[2]? What lessons, we might ask, still remained unlearnt, whether of wisdom, of self-denial, or of faith? Yet it became Him thus to tarry, as much for the fulfilment of His own mission, as for the purpose of leaving us an example. Surely He thus taught us that one who would work for God must first be left alone with God; that one who would wear God's armour must first prove it; that one who would instruct others must first discipline himself; that one who would

[1] Luke iii. 23. [2] Mark i. 13.

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tell how sin may be conquered must first learn in himself that such doctrine is no fable.

Yet once more, when that brief yet all-important ministry was fulfilled, and the testimony of the Prophet sealed with the blood of the Saviour; when the cup of death had been drunk to its dregs, and the grave itself both occupied and deserted; might we not have supposed that then at all events there could be no further room for delay, but that the Redeemer, victorious over death, might pass at once to His crown? Yet again there is *solemn pause in earth and Heaven;* a pause again of forty days[1]; a pause sometimes, it should appear, even within those forty days, of a whole week between two occasions of His appearance[2]: no sign, even then, of haste or precipitation: deliberately and slowly He paves the way for His departure, removing doubt, reproving unbelief, enlightening darkness, opening Heaven to the earthly-minded, till at last the set time is come, and amidst

[1] Acts i. 3. [2] John xx. 26.

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words and signs of blessing He ascends in the sight of His disciples from earth to Heaven.

It is of one of the last (if not the very last) of those interviews that the text speaks: and it speaks only to prepare us for yet one other interval of suspense, the latest and not the least remarkable. When their Lord had once departed, why should the disciples still wait for the comfort which He had promised? Why must ten days yet intervene between the Ascension and the gift of Pentecost? For the perfecting, we may humbly answer, of the grace of patience: for the increase of their sense of need, and consequently of their appreciation of its supply: for the encouragement, finally, of men in later times, who have to wait long for God's gifts, and for the warning of such as would rush forth without waiting.

Tarry ye, when I am departed, yet for a little season: wait, not idly, but in expectation, in prayer, in watching. And where? where but *in the city of Jerusalem*, the holy

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city, the place of the sanctuary, the centre, for the whole earth, of light and worship? Tarry there, amidst its glorious recollections, amidst its hallowed associations, amidst its elevating hopes and promises, amidst its now intelligible ceremonies and sacrifices: tarry yet awhile, in sure hope, in stedfast faith. And for how long? until when? *Until ye be endued with power from on high:* until the Holy Spirit of promise shall descend upon you, amidst signs and wonders such as shall testify even to the world without that God is in you of a truth, and with accompanying gifts and graces which shall transform the earthly into the heavenly, and make my strength for ever perfect in your weakness.

It is not without a definite purpose that I have selected this text to-day[1]. There are indeed many great signs of good at this time, both in the Church and in the world, for which we would humbly give God thanks. Not only are works of devoted charity, and institutions of a wise beneficence, testifying

[1] This Discourse was delivered at an Ordination.

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on every side to the faith and zeal of Christian women and Christian men amongst us: but in our own Church, more particularly, we may recognize with thankfulness an increasing attention on the part of the people to the ministrations of God's worship, and an increasing earnestness on the part of the Clergy in the discharge of all the duties of their high and holy calling. It is no true humility which disparages the gifts of God to us: no man ever was made vain, and no man was ever made indolent, by giving thanks. Rather does the sense of what is given arouse in every right and Christian mind the desire to increase and go forward in the work of God, until all remaining evil be put down, and all lacking good realized, in that world which has become nominally Christ's kingdom.

In some cases indeed it is the very abundance of the gifts which constitutes the danger. Opportunities of usefulness may themselves become snares: diligence in using them has brought with it to many a new

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occasion of falling. The call of the text has been forgotten. Men have not tarried till they were endued with power from on high. They have gone forth as they were, in the weakness of earth and of nature, not in the strength of Heaven and of the Spirit. There is a want of repose amongst us, as dangerous, in its way, as the very want of energy. There is an over-activity, a feverish excitement, a restlessness of doing, as injurious to real efficiency as to spiritual well-being. There is a neglect of preparation which involves a want of readiness, and which leaves a man weak for action in proportion to the multiplication of his need of strength.

Well might the call, *Tarry ye*, sound in our ears day by day. Tarry ye, before ye hasten forth to this day's duties unsanctified and unblessed. Tarry ye, before ye take up this new burden, before ye incur that additional responsibility. Tarry ye, before ye multiply for yourselves those demands upon your spiritual strength which must crush if they do not edify. But, chiefly and above

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all, tarry ye at the outset of a new life, in the foreview of a whole career, the only end of which is the grave, the completion of which shall be the signal, and its work the material, of judgment.

And what if that career be the very greatest that can be proposed to human choice? What if that life be one not secular but spiritual; the aim of which is to be to save souls, upon the discharge of which shall depend (humanly, and more than humanly, speaking) the health and the destiny of immortal men? Shall not the call to tarry before such a life be entered upon assume a tenfold emphasis, beyond what it would have in reference to any other human profession or calling?

Have we, who have for many years been discharging, have you who are this day undertaking, the office of a Priest or Deacon in the Church of Christ—let me say, in terms still plainer, of a Christian Clergyman in this Church of England, and in this busy and populous Diocese—have we, have you, ever

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tarried to reflect upon the nature and demands of our work? have we ever taken the measure of those things which we must have for this work—those things which if we have not, our ministry must be marred, if not ruined?

The Apostles, after three years of daily converse with their Lord and Master, were yet bidden to tarry till they were specially endued with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; those gifts and graces which in their combination constituted what is here called *power from on high.* Do we, do you, less need than did they that anointing? Is our human nature stronger than theirs in things spiritual? Has our early and youthful nurture, in a land of nominal Christianity, been so thorough, and so free from counteraction and contamination, that we can dispense with that enabling strength for which saints of old waited?

And what if the distinctive gifts of those first days of the Church are now withdrawn? gifts of tongues and of interpretation, of pro-

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phecy and of healing, of miraculous faith as well as infallible discernment? These gifts, St Paul himself being the witness, were never *the* qualifications either of Apostles or of their converts. They might have all these, and yet be nothing, and yet be castaways[1]. It was in the graces of the Spirit that the real power lay, even then. In comparison with them, St Paul was not afraid to use disparaging words even of miraculous gifts of God. The graces of the Spirit, God be praised, are still within the reach of every Christian, not least of every Christian minister: and for the gifts, if in their original form they have been withdrawn as having fulfilled their purpose, yet has God, in His abiding care for the Church, given us mighty and effectual substitutes, for which, if only they be seized and used, we may well thank Him, and take courage.

I profess not to make a stiff and formal distinction between the one class of Divine powers and the other; between the modified

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 27. xiii. 2.

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gifts, and the unaltered graces, of the Holy Spirit. I will speak of them both alike as powers; as constituting in their completeness that one *power from on high* for which every minister in these days has need to pray; for which, at the first commencement, as in the daily exercise, of his holy office, he may even be exhorted, in his Master's name, to tarry.

Pass before your minds in brief review this day some of those powers of the Spirit which experience teaches us to be of most avail in meeting the exigencies of a ministerial life in this country and in these times.

1. First and foremost amongst them we must place *the power of holiness.* A heart conscious of sin, and washed from that sin in the blood of Christ. A soul believing in God as a Father, in Christ as a Saviour, in the Holy Spirit as a Sanctifier and Comforter. A life consecrated to God's service, and carefully regulated and rectified, day by day, according to the example and teaching of Jesus Christ. This is indeed the first requisite.

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For the absence of this nothing else can compensate; no propriety of demeanour, no ardour of zeal, no ingenuity of argument, no persuasiveness of exhortation. Our profession is a touchstone. It tries us to the heart's core. If we are not Christians ourselves, there is a hollowness, often a perceptible hollowness, in our teaching, which vitiates the whole. We cannot come into close contact with consciences, we cannot prepare the young for Confirmation, we cannot counsel the sick, we cannot comfort the mourner, we cannot, above all, guide the dying through the valley of the dark shadow, we cannot perform any one of these more private and personal functions effectively, without having first felt for ourselves the reality of the truth, the very *powers of the world to come*[1]. We might have been respectable merchants, successful lawyers, eminent statesmen: but ministers of Christ, *stewards of God's mysteries*[2], wise to win and to keep souls, we cannot be, except we have first known for ourselves

[1] Heb. vi. 5. [2] 1 Cor. iv. 1.

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Him whom we proclaim, and not only sounded with our own line, but *drawn water* for our own daily use *out of the wells of salvation*[1].

And I call holiness a power. I believe that there is none equal to it in the world; none, certainly, equal to it in the work of the Christian ministry. It has a twofold aspect.

It is a sign to the unbelieving. Men may scoff at religion; but, depend upon it, they dread it too. *Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy*[2]. God leaves not Himself without witness: there is an echo even in the natural heart to the revelation, as made in the lives of His servants, of His own being, holiness, and truth. All else men can trifle with: eloquent sermons, convincing arguments, powerful denunciations: but they cannot trifle, they cannot inwardly trifle, with the testimony of a holy life. Let them see a man acting day by day upon the principles which he enforces on the Sunday; really self-denying, really unworldly,

[1] Isaiah xii. 3. [2] Mark vi. 20.

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really charitable in word and act; they will not be insensible to that, though they may be proof against the other. How solemn an office! to be God's witnesses! to have to reprove and to condemn by contrast! to have to live, rather than to speak, a testimony, and to be ever watchful lest in some unguarded moment we either intermit or contradict it!

And holiness is a power also towards the believing. There are many amongst our hearers who not only listen, but do. Many, who cavil not, but thirst for knowledge, hunger after righteousness, hang upon the lips of their Pastor for words of practical help, guidance, and comfort. How great a blessing for these, that it should be plain that he who guides also follows, that he who teaches others has first learnt himself! Men do not always know their own power: it comes upon a man sometimes by surprise, when he finds his own words taken so literally; when he finds that what he says from the pulpit is not only listened to, but carried home, deeply

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pondered, and actually put in practice. Then it is that he feels the responsibility of teaching. What! he asks himself—those crude thoughts, those feeble words, of mine, that superficial, if not half-conjectural, statement of the truth of God—was that regarded as so weighty that a soul must live by it? Let me remember this when next I make my preparations for preaching. Let me think more, labour more, pray more, over that ministry, of the importance of which the hearer has formed a higher estimate than the preacher. But, above all, let me take heed that my life be in accordance with my teaching. Let me not *despise*, in act at least, *one of these little ones*[1] who are looking to me for guidance. Rather let it be an added motive for personal holiness, that I may encourage and help forward some who are bent upon reaching Heaven. To them an example of holiness is power indeed. It is as a cry from above, to one ascending a steep mountain. The summit is in sight, the sky is clear, and

[1] Matt. xviii. 10.

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the path is open: I am before you: all that I told you is true: the assurance of help is no fable: the hope of progress is no delusion: the prospect of heaven is no vision: follow, and you shall attain!

2. A second element is *the power of knowledge.* In comparison with holiness knowledge is not much: but in subordination to it, as an adjunct, nay, I will say more, as a help to holiness, knowledge is a great gift. I will mention two kinds of knowledge, while I disparage none.

The knowledge of the Scriptures. Apollos, it is written, was *mighty in the Scriptures*[1]. He found a power in his knowledge of them, though those Scriptures were the Old Testament alone, and though as yet he knew almost nothing of Christ. But what do we mean when we speak of the knowledge of the Scriptures as a power? Do we mean the perpetual repetition of a few isolated phrases, found indeed in the Scriptures, perhaps amongst the most touching passages of the

[1] Acts xviii. 24.

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Scriptures, but stripped, in the using, of all that gave them either clothing or substance, and made wearisome as well as lifeless by their periodical obtrusion? We mean the very opposite of all this. We mean that deep entering, by long and loving use, into the soul and spirit of the Bible; the being possessed, and, as it were, impregnated, with its tone and principles; the being able, under such experience, to weigh men and things, the present and the future, as in the very balances of the sanctuary; the having *the Word of Christ* (as St Paul expresses it) to *dwell in us richly, in all wisdom*[1]. Would that there were more of this knowledge in us ministers of the Gospel; freeing our Sermons as much from the coldnesses of mere morality on the one hand, as from the tediousness of vain repetitions on the other!

But, along with the knowledge of the Scriptures, there must be, in the true minister, a knowledge of men also. It is a great thing if he have mixed enough with others to

[1] Col. iii. 16.

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have a large field of vision: but it is a greater thing, in his intercourse with men, few or many, to have used his eyes well; to have studied deeply the workings of character, and become what may well be designated as a master of the science of man. Some men wander everywhere through a wide world, and never acquire this knowledge: others live in the narrowest circle, and possess it in perfection. It is with the observation of man as with that of nature: some have no eye for it, and others, with the fewest opportunities, see it through and through. Hence a vast difference between one man's preaching and another's. One, with all tenderness, with the very touch of a woman, can dissect the soul of his hearer, reading him to himself till he shall cry out, *Whence knowest thou me*[1]? Still better, he can tell him his unrealized wants, his instinctive but unconscious yearnings, and supply him, even before he asks it, with the very food, the very medicine, the very balm, for want of which his soul is

[1] John i. 48.

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perishing. He can discover to him his infirmities without offending, his sins without paralyzing or daunting him. And another, with the best intentions, preaches to us as from a different world from ours: his arrows of reproof have neither point nor aim; his exhortations fly above us; his consolations buzz in our ears with no meaning: evidently he does not know us: either he is ignorant of man's nature as it is, or he considers religion and reality to be two things, different if not opposite. And why is this? Because, in this respect at least, he has not tarried till he was endued with power from on high: he forgot that the first of all departments of knowledge must be, as for a physician of the body the anatomy of the human frame, so for a physician of the soul the organization of the human heart. And therefore in his enforcement of good he is vague and uncertain, in his conflict with evil he beats the air.

There is one source, at all events, from whence every minister may draw, if he will, the knowledge of man; and that is from

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within, out of his own heart. Let a man observe himself, and he observes man. Let him judge of the sins and failings, let him judge of the motives and affections, of other men, by his own: when he argues, let him urge what has convinced himself; when he remonstrates, when he expostulates, when he soothes, when he arouses, let him deal in each case as with one constituted like himself: and, depend upon it, his words will not fall to the ground, but will touch, and move, and influence, even because they are real words, and not imagined.

3. A third great power is that which I may characterize as *the power of a single aim.* With what object are we becoming ministers of Christ to-day? Has that office an end, or has it none? Is it a mere occupation? is it, still worse, a mere livelihood? We all repudiate the supposition. But what is it then? It is a work, with a definite aim—that of benefiting, that of elevating, that of rescuing and saving men. *That I might by all means save some*[1]—that was St Paul's aim, in discharg-

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 22.

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ing (substantially) the same office. Never was its object more comprehensively stated, than in those well-known words of this very Service: *To be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord; to teach, and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for His children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever.* Let us propose to ourselves, day by day, in some one or in all of its manifold departments of action, that one object. Let us ask ourselves, day by day, Is this thing in which I am engaging likely to be conducive to my one end—that of benefiting, helping, and saving men? It may be remotely conducive, or it may be directly conducive, to that end: but, if it is neither, it is no fit work for me.

And this singleness of aim is a power. Who has not observed, in other branches of human life, the strength which it gives a man to have an aim, an end in view, to which all else in him is subordinated and subjugated?

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That is the man who succeeds in life; the man who has one object, and but one. The men who fail in life are many. But they are generally marked by this common characteristic, that they are persons of many aims, not one. They shift from one object to another. Or they give at the same time a portion of their energies to one thing and a portion to another. By their side, at the outset of the race, stood one, in other respects on a level with them, in many respects (it may be) their inferior, yet in this at all events most unlike them—that he was determined, not only to run, but to reach the goal. *This one thing I do.* He has kept the goal in view, he has looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, he has thought nothing of his competitors, he has *forgotten the things behind*[1], he has hastened straight to the mark—who can point to the instance in which such a man has not reached it?

But we, the ministers of Christ, too often are men of desultory aims. We mean well,

[1] Phil. iii. 13.

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we wish well, we purpose well: but the work of our high calling is not enough for us. Alas that we should say so! We must bring in other interests, we must divide ourselves into parts and pieces, we must supplement our one work with pursuits, more or less commendable in themselves, but having no reference whatever to the ministerial object. And far be it from us to depreciate the advantages, to ourselves and others, of our being men of large information, enlightened views, and keen interests. These things may all be helpful to our work, and not hindering. It will be an evil day for the Church of England, when her ministers cease to be men of learning, men of intellect, citizens and patriots as well as Churchmen. Without these things, in many positions to which they may be called, they cannot understand, and therefore they cannot teach, their hearers. But a single aim there may be still: there must be a single aim, if we would save our own souls or theirs.

And out of this singleness of aim spring many high qualities. It brings after it a unity

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of character. The whole man moves together. He is not a man of shreds and patches; this of one colour, and this of another. He is not speaking for Christ to-day and to-morrow forgetting or denying Him. He is not one thing in the Church, and another thing in the house. He is a consistent, not a prevaricating witness. He is one with himself; and in that unity with himself lies his strength with others.

Again, and for the same season, he is always natural. Natural, in this sense, is not the opposite of spiritual. Why should a man, who is true and real and one, assume a tone or a manner, of which the only use can be to disguise and to conceal? When he can say with truth, *I believed, and therefore have I spoken*[1], he is that which he would seem, and in naturalness lies his strength.

Once more, the man with a single aim can appreciate the comparative importance of things essential and things indifferent. No slight thing this in our day! He who is

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 13.

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bent upon the one work of benefiting and saving men has no heart to give to the petty bickerings, and no energies to bestow upon the little ornaments, of religion. These things are alike beneath his feet, with the earth out of which both spring. His test of truth is St John's. *Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God*[1]. The compass of his sympathy, if not of his entire approval, in matters of doctrine, is thus and not less extensive. *Decently and in order*[2], is, again, a maxim of his religion. His one aim takes this in. Beyond this, he may admire, as a matter of taste, or, as a matter of taste, he may condemn: he may tolerate, for the sake of peace, or, for the sake of peace, he may discard: but he refuses absolutely to attach importance to that which is, in itself, external and not spiritual.

Yet once more, the man of a single aim is a persevering man. He is not discouraged by slow progress. He is not daunted by resolute opposition. He knows that he is on

[1] 1 John iv. 2. [2] 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

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the winning side, and he will wait for victory though it tarry. Look away from him for five years or for ten years: then turn, and you will see him still at his post; still active, still determined, only more patient, more charitable, and perhaps, by God's grace, more hopeful.

4. I must add, in the fourth place, and very briefly, *the power of sympathy.* The man thus far described might possibly have been a cold man. But the Christian minister is not a cold man. He is a man of large and active sympathy. Like his Master, he *can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity*[1]. Sympathy, which is fellow-feeling, is the power which touches the very spring of humanity. He who has not this may discourse long and well upon the beauty of holiness, even upon the love of God and the grace of Christ: but he cannot affect, he cannot animate, he cannot mould the heart of those who listen, even

[1] Heb. v. 2.

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because he has not with him that Holy Spirit of love who alone can do all these things. He must speak as one who feels, and feels with them, or he cannot make them feel. Still less can his private ministrations be of any avail without sympathy. O how powerless a thing is very much of that which passes for the visitation of the poor and of the sick! What a dull and distant sound is that of the advice and consolation oftentimes thus obtruded! How little of consideration is shown in the choice of times! how little of wisdom in the choice of topics! How rash and hasty a judgment is often passed upon the appearance of indifference to counsel how indifferent! Who would be affected—let the minister ask himself, Should I be affected—by communications so unattractive, so inappropriate, so unloving, so official? It is a solemn responsibility which lies upon us in this matter of the parochial visitation of the sick and of the whole. O let us not count the hours thus spent, as though there were in the act itself a merit and a virtue! Rather

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let us ask, Into whose case did I throw myself to-day with a loving and an intelligent sympathy? Into whose spiritual condition did I enter with thoroughness, with prayer, with patience? Whom did I retain afterwards upon my memory and upon my heart, even to carry them with me to the mercy-seat from which grace flows?

Let ours, by God's grace, be that sympathy which is at once quick and deep and genuine; not that affectation, that counterfeit, of sympathy, which is ever seen through by the really suffering, as well as disallowed by Him who looks on the heart!

5. I would have added to this enumeration, did time permit, yet one last power—that for which you have been tarrying till this day—*the power of the Divine commission.* Often may we be tempted to ask ourselves, amidst the many misgivings, discouragements, and disappointments of our ministry, Why am I here? who gave me this authority? by what right do I, a sinful man, presume to carry warning or comfort to the souls

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of sinners? Then, in that day, there is reassurance and strength for him, who can answer himself in these words, *Christ sent me.* In no superstitious sense do I utter them, but in calm and sober earnestness; believing that we are charged with the very ministry of Pastors and Evangelists, by One who, having *ascended up on high,* and *led captivity captive, gave* this amongst other *gifts unto men*[1]. Thus do I understand that first question in the service for the Ordering of Priests, which else falls somewhat coldly upon the ear, but which, when taken as an enquiry into our own conviction of the authority of our mission, becomes instinct with life and interest, and may well recur to our minds in many a cloudy and dark day.

I took not this office upon myself, but was invested with it by Christ's servant acting in Christ's name. It is the will of God that all men should be saved; saved in one way; saved by one Saviour; saved by the instrumentality of a living message carried into all lands by

[1] Eph. iv. 8.

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living men. Amongst those messengers, by His undeserved mercy, am I enrolled: His commission is given me, His strength is promised, His blessing is sure. Let me only be faithful unto death, and He will give me the crown of life[1].

Well may those who have long borne, however unworthily, this high commission, welcome to their ranks, as on this day, a large accession of fellow-ministers and fellow-workmen. We can all feel with you, for we have all felt before you, the anxieties, as well as the aspirations, of this most important act of your whole lives. Live as long as you may, you can never see again an occasion quite like this. You may have passed through many trials and troubles in the way to it: you may have had many struggles of mind and heart, some difficulties, it may be, of a humbler but not less real kind, in reaching the gate of access into the ministry of Christ's Church. Now you have reached it. Let all sorrows be forgotten to-day, in the

[1] Rev. ii. 10.

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happiness of an end attained, in the hopefulness of an end in prospect. Welcome to the work which is above all other work, and to the satisfactions, present and future, of the service of a heavenly Master! Let all doubt and fear, all misgiving of mind and all faintness of heart, be put away for ever, in the brightness of that radiance which streams upon you to-day from the mercy-seat above, even from the presence of the great High Priest, who is Himself at once the Sender, and the Companion and Upholder of the sent! May your path henceforth be *as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*[1]!

To carry forth with you, from this place, the stewardship of the Word of God; to be its heralds, its witnesses, its examples; to have no other ambition but that of serving Christ and enlarging, if it be granted to you, His kingdom; to have no enemy but His, and to love all, however different from you in thought or practice, who love Him; to move

[1] Prov. iv. 18.

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everywhere amongst men, as in the world but not of it, as having One greater than the world in you and with you; to be occupied thus while life lasts, to be found thus when Christ summons or comes for you; this is the office, as of old, so in our day, of the Christian minister. A glorious calling! glorious above earth's glories, and destined to survive all! God give us grace to appreciate it, to be faithful in it, to *make full proof of it*[1]! And, in the end, in that world where there will be no need of one to teach another, *saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know Him*[2]—where the Preacher will be lost in the Congregation, and the minister silent in the worshipper—may it be given to each of us to realize the full blessedness of that brief, that crowning, promise, that then, as never before—freed from the burdens, and purified from the stains, of earth—without weariness, without distraction, without infirmity, without sin—then at last *His servants shall serve Him*[3]!

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 5. [2] Jerem. xxxi. 34. [3] Rev. xxii. 3.

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DISCOURSE XI.

THE BURIAL SERVICE.

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THE BURIAL SERVICE.

MATTHEW XIII. 30.

Let both grow together until the harvest.

WE are taught in the Apostles' Creed to distinguish between *the Holy Catholic Church* and *the Communion of Saints*. In one point of view the distinction may be said to lie between a community of living Christians and a community of Christians whether living or dead. The Holy Catholic Church may be regarded as comprising only the present generation of Christ's earthly congregation; the Communion of Saints as including within its ampler bound the whole assembly of the faithful both in earth and Heaven.

But a more careful consideration will

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show a second point of difference between the two expressions. If in one sense the Communion of Saints is a larger body than the Holy Catholic Church; the latter embracing only the Church Militant, the former the Church both Militant and Triumphant; in another sense, the proportion will be inverted, and the Holy Catholic Church will become the wider and more promiscuous, the Communion of Saints the narrower and the more exclusive, of the two. The Holy Catholic Church is the Visible as opposed to the Invisible Church; the nominal and professing, as distinguished from the real and spiritual, body of Christ. *Catholic*, because confined to no race of men and to no form of Christianity, but including *all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours*[1]. *Holy*, not by duty only or profession, but in a higher and stricter sense; because amidst and within that community, though not effectually in the heart of each one of its members, the Holy and Eternal

[1] 1 Cor. i. 2.

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Spirit dwells. Whereas the Communion of Saints is that Church within the Church, that shrine (if we might so express it) within the temple, that Holy of Holies beyond what itself from the proximity of the Divine habitation is all holy, which, visible only, in its distinctness, to an all-seeing Eye, comprises none but the true and the real amongst many nominal worshippers, and will furnish hereafter the several stones[1] of that new and spiritual fabric in which *the throne of God and of the Lamb* is to be erected as its final glory[2].

Now this distinction, if consistent with God's revelations, is full of important doctrine.

We say that it was the design of Christ that there should exist in the world until His second coming a body of men, united by the acknowledgement of a common faith, by a participation in common ordinances; a body constantly on the increase, through the labours of Apostles and Evangelists, of Pastors

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 5. [2] Rev. xxii. 1.

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and Teachers, in all parts of the earth; the members of which should pass unquestioned and unchallenged by each other, as by Him, through a life-time of uncertain duration, and be subjected, at death or after death, to a searching and sifting process which should decide once for all upon the sincerity and consequently upon the destiny of each.

The Gospels furnish ample illustration, ample proof, of this statement.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of this world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth[1].

The kingdom of heaven: the state of things under the Gospel. The call of the Gospel shall have this effect. Not that the net cast

[1] Matt. xiii. 47—50.

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into the sea shall enfold some, and exclude others. Not that the test of character in the good and the bad shall be the entrance, or the refusal to enter, into the fold of the Christian community. Doubtless in some senses this is true. But here it is differently stated, differently viewed. Good and bad enter alike. The net encloses both kinds. It is left in the sea until it is full. Till then the process is indiscriminate. Not till it is full—and that time is not yet come, for the Gospel net is still out in the wide waters, gathering of every kind—not till it is full, and that is not till the end of this world, will it be drawn in towards the shore, that the work of distinguishing and discriminating may succeed that of collecting and of gathering. The net that encloses all, both bad and good, is the Holy Catholic Church; the visible, the professing, the nominal Christendom: the vessels into which the good are finally gathered may represent that smaller, that more select, that as yet indistinguishable community, which, from its actual and personal contact with the

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life-giving Spirit, is described and shall one day be manifested as the true Communion of Saints.

It is thus that in the Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son, a distinction is drawn between the promiscuous assemblage who throng the palace of the royal host, and the guests who are qualified, by the possession of a peculiar attire, to partake of a banquet which is not for all[1]. If in that Parable the language of other passages of Scripture may seem to be in one point reversed; the accepted spoken of as the multitude, the rejected but as one amongst many; we are taught rather to infer from this the individual penetration of that searching scrutiny, the impossibility of but one untrue member passing unchallenged through that last ordeal, as well as the certainty of the coexistence till then, within the pale of an outward Christianity, of the Christian in name and the Christian in deed.

Now, not to multiply quotations upon a

[1] Matt. xxii. 2—14.

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point sufficiently obvious to a careful student of Scripture, let us pass on to view some of the consequences of this truth; the designed existence, throughout all ages, of this distinction between a Holy Catholic Church and a true Communion of Saints.

But first we should notice that the toleration of a nominal as well as a true Church of Christ does not necessarily preclude the operation of discipline. While our Lord forbids the attempt to pull up prematurely and forcibly the tares which in the present Dispensation grow so abundantly amidst the wheat; the attempt, made by so many, to prejudge human character, to exclude from the sympathies and the charities of a common Christianity those who appear to the self-constituted inspector to be Christians only in name; neither He, nor His Apostles after Him, deny to His earthly Church the right to banish from their company those who bring scandal upon their name and His, or to pronounce, on evidence duly weighed, that sentence of excommunication which severs the

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link of union between the soul of man and those particular blessings and aids of the Holy Spirit which are pledged only to the Church of God.

Our Lord prescribes an appeal to the Church, that is, to the assembled Christian congregation, in cases of deliberate and obstinate injury done to one of its members; and sanctions by His express authority the regarding *as a heathen man and a publican*, that is, as one between whom and us there exists no tie but that of a common humanity, the man who neglects to hear, or in other words to recognize and to obey, the decision of the Church upon the case brought before them[1].

And St Paul, in a well-known passage of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, actually pronounces upon an offender, by the authority of Christ Himself, a sentence of exclusion and banishment from the Christian body so abrupt and so formidable that it is described as a *delivering to Satan for the destruction of*

[1] Matt. xviii. 15—17.

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the flesh, in the hope that, by the awakening of timely fear and of deep repentance, *the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*[1].

Such acts of discipline were by no means uncommon during several centuries of the Church's history.

In our own Church at the present time they may be said to be virtually extinct.

In one place the language of regret is uttered over the fact of their cessation. In the Commination Service, with which we enter year by year upon the season of Lent, after recording the practice of *the Primitive Church to put to open penance such persons as stood convicted of notorious sin,* it is added, *Instead whereof, until the said discipline may be restored again, which is much to be wished, it is thought good that the general sentences of God's cursing against impenitent sinners should be read at this time in the presence of you all,* &c.

Elsewhere a partial attempt is made to

[1] 1 Cor. v. 3—5.

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restore this discipline. Thus in the Rubric at the opening of the Communion Service, directions are given for the exclusion from that ordinance of any *open and notorious evil liver*, or of any persons *between whom malice and hatred is perceived to reign*, until, in the former case, an open avowal shall be made of repentance and purposed reformation, or, in the latter, assurances of forgiveness be exchanged and wrongs mutually redressed. The same feeling is indicated also in the direction prefixed to the Burial Service, that those words of hope and of blessing are not to be used over *any that die excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves.*

It is needless to say, what all are aware of, that these regrets in the first case, and these directions in the other two, have been equally frustrated by the event. We continue to express, Lent after Lent, a wish for the restoration of Church discipline: but every year makes us feel more and more strongly that the thing is impossible: it is one of those past ideas which could only be transplanted into

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the age in which we live, by an effort as unnatural as it would certainly be short-lived. With regard to exclusions from the Communion, we know how rarely a Clergyman can possess that kind and amount of proof, with reference to the misconduct or the enmities of his Parishioners, which could alone make it safe for him to proceed to an extremity which the very same Rubric requires that he should be prepared to establish to the satisfaction of a legal tribunal. We know, in short, that practically the direction is disregarded. Conscience, or the dread of public opinion, may suggest to an evil-doer the propriety of abstaining from such an attendance: but, so far as the Minister is concerned, he might with almost absolute safety risk the chance of being repelled from the Lord's Table: few Clergymen will hazard even a private remonstrance; almost none will take upon themselves the consequences of a public prohibition. And with reference, finally, to the threatened exclusion of the dead from the ordinary form of Christian Burial, we all know that penalties

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of a most serious kind are attached to the refusal by a Minister to utter any one of the prescribed words of hope and of confidence over the most depraved of human offenders: he must give thanks to God for the sure and certain hope of another world by the grave of the drunkard or the adulterer: even he who has died by his own hand must be interred with the same formality of benediction, unless a judicial verdict—difficult and rare of attainment, partly by reason of this very threat of exclusion from the rites of Christian sepulture—shall pronounce that the act which destroyed life was done with the clearest exercise of reason, and that no passing cloud obscured for a moment the understanding which dictated the sin.

Now there are those who look upon this cessation of all ecclesiastical discipline, for such indeed it is, as not only a great loss but a great crime. They think that a community which has relinquished or been deprived of the power to punish, has parted with one of the chief characteristics of a true

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Church. They urge, and not unreasonably, the scandal brought upon a congregation by the immorality of one of its worshippers or its communicants. And not staying to enquire whether the progress of events, the change of circumstances, the overruling hand of God's government, may possibly have created some compensation, partial or complete, for the loss which they deplore, they can only exhaust themselves in fruitless efforts to reimpose upon the Church of the nineteenth century every institution of the fifth or of the tenth.

But may it not be worthy of a moment's reflection, whether indeed the restoration of a (so called) Church discipline is thus obviously and necessarily desirable? whether it might not involve, not inconveniences only, but injuries and evils? whether we may not still possess, though in a different form, many of the greatest advantages of the most rigid discipline? and whether those which are lost may not have been taken from us by a vast combination of circumstances, bringing with

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them more than an equivalent for all that they have superseded?

While the Christian body, whether in the world generally, or in a particular city or district, was a small and compact community, definitely marked out from the heathenism or the Judaism that surrounded it; while the Christian profession of each member of it was a matter of special and individual choice; while, moreover, the Gospel had still, if I may so express it, its character to earn, and incurred the greatest risk of being slanderously and blasphemously defamed; it was on the one hand possible, and on the other necessary, that every one who openly belied his faith by his life should be cut off from the society which he contaminated. Just, perhaps, this might be at all times: but in such times it was also possible, and it was also expedient. Great crime, or even great carelessness, was then a thing patent and self-confessed. And a disregard of such things on the part of the Christian body would have argued an indifference or a

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timidity which might have injured their Master's cause in the world.

How is it now? now, when the world itself has changed sides? now, when all alike are bound by the responsibilities, and entitled to the privileges, of a Christian profession? Imagine for one moment the consequences, in any Parish with which we are acquainted, of an attempt on the part of the Minister, whether acting alone or with assessors, to bring to ecclesiastical punishment all offenders against Christian morality. How inextricable would be his perplexity, when he sought to deal honestly with his own conscience, as to the cases which it was his business to investigate and to denounce! How terrible the suspicion of connivance in every instance that escaped his vigilance! How dreadful the effects of having laid against any man an unproved or a half-proved charge! How exhausting, how secularizing, how demoralizing, the influence upon his own heart and character, of hours spent in the prosecution of such enquiries! How ruinous

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to the tone of his public and his private ministrations? How destructive to the whole estimation of his sacred office amongst those to whom he ministers! How unequal, how iniquitous, after all, must be the result of so precarious, so accidental, so arbitrary a process! How great the injury, even to those morals which it is the object of all such endeavours to protect, from the public exposure of the details of secret offences; secret until the hand of the Church is uplifted to strip off the disguise which veils them! Would the result, on the whole, be serviceable, or the contrary, to the cause of holiness and of God? Would the punishment, be it what it might, of such scandals be capable of being made an equivalent for the mischief of their publication? Would the removal of a few such individual blemishes (even when notorious and flagrant) from the Christian congregation, the open expulsion of a handful of evil-doers from the society of Christians and from the ordinances of God's worship, at all compensate for the enormous extension of

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the knowledge of their existence, involved in the determination to drag them to the light? Is it not far better that they should be left, even as now, to the interposition, when they can no longer be concealed, of a tribunal either avowedly or at least practically secular?

But is it indeed true that discipline is now a thing unknown?

In the first days of the Gospel, as every one even slightly acquainted with the literature and history of those times is well aware, flagrant immorality was, not the exception, but the rule, of the society amidst which the Church of Christ was planted. I do not say that there were none whose lives were pure, or whose principles of judgment were moral. I do not say that there were none, amongst the orators, poets, and historians of Rome, who felt deeply, and severely stigmatized, the prevailing wickedness of their countrymen. I do not say that then, any more than in later ages, men paraded industriously before the eyes of the world the vices which they in-

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dulged and cherished. I suppose that even then there was just enough of virtue and of conscience to make it worth while for any one who valued his character to cloke his profligacy in hypocrisy. But, whether disguised or displayed, there can be no question that a general corruption of morals marked the age in which Christianity entered the world, and was constantly on the increase during some centuries which followed. The terrible accusations of the Epistle to the Romans, the vehement exhortations of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, on topics which we now regard as requiring neither the one nor the other from a Christian teacher; some of which we read with a blush, or presume to pass over, as matters on which the natural conscience, apart from Revelation, is sufficiently enlightened and informed; show that not only the world which surrounded the infant Church, but that Church itself, was destitute to a great extent of the restraints and aids of a strong public opinion on points of moral conduct, and needed, in the same

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proportion, a system of severe discipline within the Christian body to secure its conformity in any tolerable degree to the standard of a Divine requirement.

But now, through God's blessing upon primitive doctrine and primitive discipline within the enclosure of His Church, a vast change has been wrought in the moral condition of the world. The principles of Christian morals have impregnated the atmosphere of human society. In this one respect, if in no other, it has doubtless been for good that Christianity should have become the religion of kingdoms and empires as well as of individuals. The effect of its adoption as the nominal faith of the Western world has at least been favourable to morality if not to holiness. Men who acknowledged the Gospel as their creed and called Christ their Master could not any longer justify, though they might be too weak to relinquish, practices which the Gospel proscribed and against which Christ denounced judgment. If the practice of the world remained unaltered, at

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least its principles rose with the profession of Christianity. There was now a tribunal which could sit in judgment upon the inventions of men, and pronounce authoritatively upon the orthodoxy of rival philosophies. It would no longer be possible for a man calling himself a Christian to avow the idea that pleasure was the chief good, or that acts of the body were immaterial in the estimate of the God and Judge of souls. And it was much more than this. For beside and within this juster scheme of morality there came into existence also a considerable and an ever increasing amount of true devotion and of spiritual holiness. There were many who held Christianity as a form; but there were some who felt its power. There was not only a Holy Catholic Church, but within, though by no means co-extensive with it, a Communion also of Saints. And that which was the creed of the one was the faith of the other. That which was the profession of the one was the life of the other. So that there was always before the eyes of men who no-

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minally adopted and outwardly bound themselves by the rules of Christian morality the spectacle of men like themselves who loved and obeyed those rules, exemplifying the possibility of their performance, and shaming those who said and did not. It was impossible that this obedience should be witnessed from age to age without results. It acted with real and persuasive power upon the society within which it was displayed. What might otherwise, under the influence of a long course of inconsistent profession, have become a merely nominal code of duty, was saved from this fatal deterioration by the sight of its living energy in some, and became more and more established from generation to generation as the rule of life and the standard of judgment, even for those who too often, through infirmity of purpose, or the power of evil habit, failed to exemplify it in themselves.

Now the point to which I desire your attention is this: that, in proportion as public opinion has become more and more Christian

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and more and more influential; in proportion as the nominally Christian world has learned to judge more correctly, and to express its judgment more decidedly, upon questions of morality; in proportion, finally, as the advance of intelligence has brought with it increased facilities for the avowal and enforcement of the judgments of this public opinion in the way of approbation or censure; in the same degree it has become less necessary that the Church should exert itself to discover and to punish cases of irregularity or of sin. This is one of the innumerable instances in which the course of events, under the overruling hand of God's Providence, has introduced a change of means, without involving a loss in the result. It is no longer necessary for the Church to vindicate those principles of morality in which even the world agrees with her. The Church has been too long in existence to be under any risk of misconstruction as to her Master's or her own rules of judgment. She may, if circumstances so require, leave her own members to the ope-

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ration of the ordinary sentences of public opinion, without any apprehension of the consequences to her own character, or to the cause of truth and holiness in the world. If he who has openly sinned is no longer put to an open penance before the Christian congregation, he is not therefore left unpunished by a tribunal the principles of which he can better appreciate, and the operation of whose edicts no flight can evade.

In maintaining that the necessity for Church discipline, not indeed (for this is a different case) over the ministers, but over the members, of the Christian congregation, may have been superseded by the general diffusion of an enlightened public opinion, I shall not hesitate to take as an example of my meaning that which has been to so many conscientious persons one of the greatest stumblingblocks, the Burial Service of our Church.

In that Service, appointed for promiscuous use in the case of all baptized persons—with the two exceptions, which in fact are of

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the rarest occurrence, that of persons legally excommunicated, and that of those who are pronounced by the verdict of a jury to have laid violent hands on themselves without the excuse of insanity—in that Service (amongst other expressions of similar import) God is declared to have *taken to Himself, of His great mercy*, the soul of our departed brother, and his body is committed to the ground *in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Now it is urged that of few comparatively amongst the departing members of his congregation could a Clergyman declare with confidence that they died in sure and certain hope, that they rested in Christ, that they were delivered, in the sense obviously intended, out of the miseries of a sinful world. Far more often, alas! is he called to lay in the grave persons who have given no sign, in life, of faith or devotion. Not unfrequently, those who have been notoriously neglectful, through life, of the appointed means of Christian improvement. Occasion-

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ally, those whom no doubtful rumour has accused of living in sin; the dishonest, the drunkard, or the adulterer. Rarely, but in the experience of many Clergymen once or twice, a man who has ended a life of reckless immorality by a deliberately self-inflicted death, but whom, nevertheless, the indulgent and not unamiable weakness of those who sat in judgment upon the circumstances of his decease has rescued from the unavailing penalty of his crime by a verdict of temporary derangement.

How, it has been asked, can an honest or reverent man thank God in the presence of his people for such a life and for such an end? What is this but a mockery of devotion, displeasing to God, perhaps injurious to man?

And two remedies have suggested themselves for a necessity so painful.

The one is, to give a Clergyman some discretion as to the use or omission of the strong expressions referred to. Over a parishioner whose faith and love have been

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beautifully expressed in life and in the closing scene of life, he may still give thanks as now, and express the sure and certain hope which his heart approves and ratifies. Over another, the evidences of whose piety have been less conclusive, he may omit the language of certainty; he may express perhaps a hope, but refrain from adding to that hope the disproportionately positive epithets: while in a third case, where not only the life has been careless or immoral, but the very death has taken place under circumstances of clear and notorious guilt, he may refrain altogether from the utterance of one hopeful or encouraging word, and register by his silence beside the open grave a sentence of condemnation which he anticipates but too surely as written in Heaven.

Doubtless there is something plausible in this proposal. But are we indeed prepared to commit to the best of earthly pastors a decision, for ourselves or for our kindred, so awfully responsible? Here and there, it may be, a wise and well-judging man will exercise

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aright the power entrusted to him. He will allow no differences of opinion, and no ambiguous rumours, to influence him in the selection of those phrases which are to give comfort or anguish to the surrounding mourners. But how shall we protect ourselves against the eccentricities of those ministers—and they are not unknown amongst us—who regard the expression of a confident assurance of safety, or even the assertion of a consciousness of Divine election, as necessary conditions of a Christian death-bed? How are we to secure ourselves or others from the effect of a morbid scrupulosity or a narrow-minded sectarianism, when once the use or the refusal of certain expressions in the Service for Christian Burial is connected with the opinion of the officiating priest upon the state and prospect of the departed soul?

Another proposal has been, to mitigate, for all, the strength of that language in which the congregation expresses its thanksgiving for the dead. Let the words *sure and certain* be omitted. Let some other expressions be

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moderated and qualified. And let the Service thus amended be used indiscriminately over all.

Thus, in order to make room for the unbeliever or the suicide, the sure word of promise, which has comforted and quickened for so many generations the heart of the mourning Christian, is to be exchanged for something tamer and more general! Long will it be before such an alteration will cease to shock and to stagger those who remember the Service in its older and better version. Long will it be before the ear ceases to expect and to miss the too well-remembered form of sound words, *Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.* And what, meanwhile, will have been gained by it? Shall we be better able to utter over the notorious sinner the words

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of modified hope? Shall we be able, any more than before, to anticipate, with ever so faint a peradventure, the entrance into God's kingdom of one of those of whom an Apostle, in the name of his Master, has warned us that they cannot enter it[1]? Yet by the very fact of the change we shall have made ourselves responsible, in a far different sense from the present, for the literal accuracy of every word that we retain.

We may feel for the scruples, and admire the courage, of those Clergymen of our Church who have braved obloquy and borne penalties rather than partake in an act which to them was profane: if they so regard it, they have no choice, cruel as we must deem the enforcement of the law in such cases, but to refuse and to suffer: and yet, while we respect their devotion, we cannot applaud their judgment. The true remedy for their difficulty is not to be sought either here or there; either in the permission to omit, or in the endeavour to moderate, the terms of

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

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Christian hope in which we commit to the ground the body of our departed brother; but in a larger and a truer view of the position of Christ's Visible Church on earth, and of our own duty as its members. Let us resolutely and fearlessly contemplate all that is involved in it. There is a great community gathered by Christ's command out of every part of the world, and consolidated by one rite of inauguration, the Sacrament of Christian Baptism. This community is designed to be taken on its profession: each member of it is to pass for what he calls himself: he is to enjoy all the privileges, and incur all the responsibilities, of a Christian: he is not to be met at every turn with the language of suspicion or mistrust: when he is sick, he is to be ministered to as one of the Christian body: when he dies, he is to be laid in his grave with the words which appertain to the condition of a departed Christian. So long as the Church maintains this principle, and refrains from arrogating to herself the power of discerning spirits; so long no harm is done

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by the recognition of individual membership, even where it addresses as a partaker of the Christian hope one whose life most plainly contradicts it. It is only when the Church steps out of her proper province, and ventures to pronounce upon the sincerity or insincerity of her individual members; it is only when she avows, or acts as if she considered, that the words of Christian charity used to one of the baptized are words not of general but of particular application, stamping as genuine a faith which after all may be a counterfeit; it is then and then only that mischief can result from her practice, and the protest must be entered, not against the practice itself, but against an erroneous and perverse inference from it.

I question indeed whether any omission or modification of particular expressions in the Burial Service to adapt it to the individual character could convey a more awful lesson than that which is involved in the promiscuous use of the Service as it stands, and the contrast in certain cases between the

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words employed and the circumstances which contradict them. There is, if I might venture so to express it, a sort of solemn protest in the hopes and the thanksgivings uttered over the grave of the sinner, which is far more thrilling in its testimony against sin and for holiness than any omission or any qualification that the ingenuity of man could have devised. *That is what ought to have been true of him: that is what ought to have been his life and his death: that is what ought to have been prognosticated and anticipated as to his eternal prospect: that is what the Church shall still say of him, for he wore to the last the veil and the form of a believer, and the day of the final disclosure is not yet.* And at the same time, perhaps, it is the suspicion, or the more than suspicion, of every bystander that this man did wear a disguise when he called himself a Christian; that the hopes of the Gospel were never his; that his life was not a Christian's life, nor his death a Christian's death. And therefore this is but the consistent close of a long drama; the last

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scene of a life, it may be of hypocrisy, it may be of silent negation; the final exercise of the Church's toleration; the consignment of an unworthy, a spurious son, to the judgment of One who *is greater than our heart and knoweth all things*[1]. True to her great principle, true to the law of her very existence, the Church judges no man: it is for her to believe, and, where she cannot believe, to hope, all things of all men: to the last, she must refrain from every effort to read the heart, to interpret the life: what a man called himself, that will she call him: and if he dies professing himself a Christian, she will utter over his lifeless remains the thanksgiving which so regards him.

The subject which has now engaged us is full of serious admonition and of solemn warning.

We must beware of that natural impatience which is ever prompting the enquiry, *Wilt Thou then that we go and gather them up?* It is a natural enquiry; because we can

[1] 1 John iii. 20.

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scarcely avoid observing the conduct one of another, and judging as we observe. Nay, for certain purposes it is not only natural, but necessary, thus to observe and thus to judge. It is not required of us, but forbidden, that we should cultivate indiscriminate friendships, or associate on terms of intimacy with all who call themselves Christians. On this point we have the direction of Revelation itself. *I write unto you*, St Paul says, *not to keep company with any man who, being called a brother*, that is, a Christian, *is a fornicator or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such an one no not to eat*[1]. This is the rule for our own conduct. For ourselves, we must beware of those evil communications, those associations with evil persons, which may corrupt or lower the holiness of our own lives. But this is yet a different thing from judging another. That office is not ours. *To his own Master he standeth or falleth*[2]. Let us rejoice, and not murmur, when we see any indication, in such

[1] 1 Cor. v. 11. [2] Rom. xiv. 4.

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a man, of adhesion or return to the faith which he professes. Let us regard him as still a brother, though undutiful, erring, or fallen. Let us watch for his good rather than his evil characteristics. *Consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted*[1]. And if we hear of his death, if we stand by his grave, let us still treat him as a child of the covenant, and consign him, if it be but with trembling awe, to the mercies of the Saviour of sinners.

And for ourselves, how grave a warning does the thought of a Visible Church suggest to us! How does it remind us that there is such a thing as having a name to live and being all the while dead! How does it caution us against trusting in a position which by its very nature is ambiguous, precarious, temporary! What is it to us, that we should for a few short years have *eaten and drunk in Christ's presence*, and heard Him *teaching in our streets*[2]? What is it to have called Him *Lord, Lord*, or sat before Him to hear His Gospel? This may show us to be members of His

[1] Gal. vi. 1. [2] Luke xiii. 26.

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Church on earth; but does it give us, of itself, any passport into His Church in Heaven? No, there is an Invisible as well as Visible Community; *a Church of the first-born enrolled in Heaven*[1], as well as an earthly congregation comprising peoples and nations. Do we belong to both of these, or only to one?

Finally, the existence of a Catholic Church on earth, and the large toleration which it is required to extend to its members in its estimate of their condition in life and in death, is not only compatible with, but itself proclaims, the approach of a day of final judgment which is to *begin*, as an Apostle has written, *at the House of God*[2]. Under the government of a just God, the present mingled scene cannot be for ever. It cannot be that the evil and the good should be permanently intermixed; the former as well as the latter going in and out freely in the very sanctuary of God. If the tares and the wheat are allowed thus to grow together, it can be only for a time;

[1] Heb. xii. 23. [2] 1 Pet. iv. 17.

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there must be a day of separation coming; there must be a time of rectification and re-adjustment which shall correct the unequal issues of our earthly existence. They who would clear the Temple of God now of all things that offend, they who would go apart by themselves into an inner shrine of exclusive worship into which no unclean person shall enter, little know that they are not only attempting an impossibility, they are also endeavouring to remove from the earth one of the clearest proofs of a coming judgment; they are seeking to set the thrones at once for the great assize; they are presuming to seat themselves in the tribunal of the Omniscient, and thus to defeat one chief portion of the design of His appearing. It is the sight of wide-spread confusion; the observation of much that defiles within His Temple; the present toleration of much false profession; the benediction pronounced beside the grave of the ungodly; it is this which most loudly heralds the approach of the Refiner and the Purifier[1]:

[1] Mal. iii. 3.

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this, which predicts, by necessitating, judgment; this, which makes a man say, in the very bewilderment of a hope long deferred, *Verily there must be* elsewhere *a reward for the righteous: doubtless there is a God who shall* hereafter *judge the earth*[1]*!*

[1] See Psalm lviii. 11.

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DISCOURSE XII.

FREE AND OPEN CHURCHES.

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FREE AND OPEN CHURCHES.

JEREMIAH XIII. 20.

Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?

THE question would sound differently in different ears.

At the present moment it would have for some a literal significance, not without anxiety in a national as well as individual aspect[1]. There are many persons to whom it might be said this day—not in the tone of reproach, but of lively and serious sympathy—Where is thy flock, thy beautiful flock? When the hand of the Lord is upon a nation's cattle,

[1] Written during the Cattle Plague.

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upon its oxen and upon its sheep, in the form of a very grievous murrain; when in some cases a loss of annual income, from this one source, of thousands of pounds, has fallen upon a man whose wealth, like that of Patriarchs of old, was in his flocks and in his herds; and when, extending the view more widely, the country itself begins to apprehend a large diminution, if not a virtual deprivation, of one chief support of human life; then the question of the text may be applied, without irreverence, in a plain literal way, and a man, or a nation, smarting under this one of God's sore chastisements, may be addressed in the very words of the plaintive expostulation, *Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?*

It was not, however, of a literal but a figurative flock, that the words were first written. The flock spoken of was a population. Judah, that privileged but graceless nation, is asked, what has become of her people? She has brought upon herself, by

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her sins, a cruel captivity: a conquering race, God's scourge and sword, has entered from the north, and carried away captive the soul and strength of the land: *thou hast taught them,* saith the Prophet, *to be captains, and as chief over thee;* taught them, that is, by thy carelessness, taught them by thy neglect of warnings, taught them by thy luxurious ease and thy disregard of national interests: *for the greatness of thine iniquity* is the judgment come upon thee, of widowhood and the loss of children. And so in all times has the tale repeated itself. One nation has come against another nation, and taken from it its treasure and its strength; taken from it its land to be another's possession, or its people to serve strangers in a strange place. We have seen it ourselves. We have seen the combination of stronger powers against a weaker; we have seen violence and injustice prosper, and foreigners sitting down to divide betwixt them at leisure the spoils of an unprovoked and an ungenerous aggression. And to the nation which

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has suffered such wrong the language of inspired Prophecy might address, as to Judah of old, but without any sting of reproach or sarcasm, the very enquiry of the text, *Where is now the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?*

The same words have their application to things spiritual. We read in the Prophet Ezekiel, of shepherds of Israel who forgat their duty; shepherds who fed themselves, but fed not their flocks; who ate the fat, and clothed them with the wool, and killed the sheep in due season, but who neither healed the sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back the wandering, nor sought the lost; so that God's sheep wandered upon every high hill, and were scattered over all the face of the earth in the cloudy and dark day[1]. Those shepherds of Israel were the type, and should be the warning, of all unfaithful pastors in all ages of the Church. When a Minister, by name and profession,

[1] Ezek. xxxiv. 1, &c.

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of Jesus Christ has allowed his charge to take injury by his own lethargy or inconsistency; when he has sat loose to all duties except such as were public and compulsory, and sought his own ease or his own amusement instead of the welfare and spiritual happiness of his people; and when, as the result of this, he has seen the sheep of Christ scattered up and down upon their pastures, with none to warn, none to cheer, none to edify them in life, and none to support them in death; well might the voice of Divine remonstrance address such a man in the stillness of his indolent chamber or amidst the merriment of his busy dissipation, and say, *Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?*

Or, yet once more, the same remonstrance might be addressed, under certain circumstances, not to the individual Minister, but to the Church itself.

God has given to our beloved Church of England many unexampled gifts. Gifts, in

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one aspect, of spiritual enjoyment: gifts, in another aspect, of spiritual influence.

A National Church—however limited or however impaired may be its claims to that title—has advantages, its adversaries themselves being judges, of no common order, over any other religious community. Granting, and making full allowance for, all that may be urged on the other side, as to the dangers of worldliness, of compromise, of lukewarmness and supineness, of unworthy uses of patronage, and of concessions demanded of it in a thousand ways by the State; we yet feel—we ought to feel far more—that a Church like that which we call the *pure and reformed branch* of the Catholic Church of Christ *established in this realm*, has talents entrusted to it of extraordinary price, for the use or abuse of which it must certainly give solemn account.

And remember, the Church does not mean the Clergy: it means the Congregation: the Church of England means the sum total of all members, whether lay or clerical, of that

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great Christian society which is replenished, year by year, and week by week, in the administration of holy Baptism, and which avails itself, more or less regularly, of the ordinances of prayer, of preaching, and of communion, according to the form prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. When the Church is said to have talents of God entrusted to it, it is not the Clergy alone, it is the Congregation, it is the sum of the Church Congregations of England, which holds that sacred trust. And every word which is spoken in reference to this subject, applies not to the ministers alone in each place, but to the body, to the Congregation, to all Church-worshippers and especially to all Church-communicants. And speaking thus widely, thus universally, to Christ's people here or elsewhere gathered together for worship, I would say, in all plainness of speech, and in all seriousness of spirit, You have a great trust consigned to you—not only for enjoyment, but also for influence—for the use or abuse of which in your generation

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you are solemnly responsible in the sight of God.

Reflect for a moment or two upon some of its particulars.

You have, then, first of all—I am speaking now of advantages peculiar to what we still call the National Church—*a Parochial Organization.* What does that expression mean? It means, that the Gospel net is spread, as it were, all over England; that, without waiting for each place or each person to choose his religion, or even his form of worship, the Nation has preoccupied all places and all persons for the Church: a man cannot help being born, not only into a Town or a County, but into a Parish: he cannot help it: he is born therefore, whether he will or no, into something which has not only the mark of Christ, but the mark of Christ's Church—and not only the mark of Christ's Church, but of one particular branch and section of Christ's Church—upon it already: so that there is, in theory at least, some one

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standing ready, at his birth, to care for his soul; some one, not of his own family or household, but a stranger so far as blood is concerned, whom the Providence of God has set there, just because the Church is a National Church, to see that he does not enter upon life, and that he does not pass through life—that he does not form any of the special connections of life, nor undergo any of the special trials and sorrows of life—nor yet pass out of life—unvisited by the calls, or uncheered by the hopes, of the Gospel; that it shall be his own fault if he know not at each turn his duty; his own fault if he feels not, at each epoch and stopping-place of his being, the strength and the consolation which is requisite and appropriate for each. This, I say, is the theory of the Church's Parochial Organization: a theory which belongs not, and cannot belong—for use or else for neglect—to any other religious community, but only and singly to the National Church.

Again, you have—alone of all bodies—*a*

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really independent Ministry. In theory at least, every Parochial Minister of the Church of England has his maintenance provided already by the law of the land, regulating and securing to him, while he holds his office, the pious munificence of a long-departed age. And why do I reckon this among the advantages, among the talents, of the Church which is the Congregation? Why do I mention an independent Ministry among the peculiar privileges of a National Church? Not chiefly because it relieves you from an obligation which (according to Holy Scripture) would otherwise lie upon you, to maintain your Minister by your own free offerings[1]: not for this reason chiefly—because this might be so stated as to be no blessing; if it made you less abundant givers, or if it deprived you of the opportunity of testifying your love. The independent Ministry of our Parish Churches is a benefit to the Congregation, chiefly, on this ground—that it enables your Minister to speak to you as a

[1] Matt. x. 10. Luke x. 7. 1 Cor. ix. 7—14. Gal. vi. 6.

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man who is not dependent, either way, upon your smile or upon your frown: a man who has not to trim his course, either in his doctrine or in his conduct, according to the wind of popular caprice: a man who can stand up before you in public, or visit you in private, with the freedom and the boldness of one who *seeks not yours but you*[1]; who has God only for his Teacher, God only for his Master, and God only for his Judge. This is your advantage. You want not a man who shall deceive you with a lying, or flatter you with a timeserving Gospel: you want one who can inform, instruct, admonish you—even when your hearts are reluctant—*with all longsuffering*[2] indeed, but *with all authority*[3] too. No Congregation is so much to be pitied as that which can feed or starve, engage or dismiss, its own Minister at its own pleasure. Sore is the temptation then, for him, to *speak* only *smooth things:* sore the judgment which shall befall a people that has made its prophets

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 14. [2] 2 Tim. iv. 2. [3] Tit. ii. 15.

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prophesy deceits, and say, *Peace, Peace*, to them when perhaps there was no peace[1].

To a Parochial Organization, and to an Independent Ministry, I add just one other talent entrusted to a National Church: and that is, *its Parish Churches;* the possession of those actual buildings, oftentimes so fair and so beautiful, in which generation after generation has served God in worship, and which stand with open doors, often as the office of devotion is performed, inviting whosoever will to enter and be at home.

I cannot indeed stand in this place[2] and say that you entered upon the possession of your Parish Church without cost or without self-sacrifice. The Providence of God threw upon you the task of rebuilding from its smouldering ruins your ancient House of Prayer, and nobly and magnificently have you done it. But still I can say this to you. Your Parish Church, when rebuilt, was in a different position, as to its dignity and its security, from

[1] Isaiah xxx. 10. Jerem. vi. 14. Ezek. xiii. 10.

[2] The Parish Church of Doncaster.

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any that it could have occupied if England had not had a National Church upon the inheritance of which you have entered. You never would have built this Church, if it was at last, however stately and beautiful, to be but a private Chapel—the property of a few trustees—the worshipping-place only of such as would take shares in it, and buy themselves here the privilege of prayer and praise. It is still to the existence of a National Church in England, that even this building owes much, owes most, of its high standing. Even you, who paid for its erection, are still debtors, I repeat it, to a National Church, for the inheritance of all that is distinctive in this Parish Church as in the other Parish Churches of England. And how great is this! Who can overestimate the treasure entrusted to our keeping in this institution of a Parish Church? You who shed tears of sorrow, as over a lost parent, when you stood over this Church's ruins, can tell from actual experience what it is to be even for a very few years destitute of a Parish Church. What

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countless memories does it enshrine! What tender associations does it embody and transmit! What facilities does it give for seeking God! What encouragements to remember and to hallow His day! What a precious veil does it spread over the secrets of the heart, as they pour themselves out in the ordinance of worship! How does it enable persons who dread to be thought religious, nevertheless to *be* so, in the promiscuousness of a public concourse! How many a man, who would write himself a hypocrite if he sought out a Meeting-house, or intruded himself into a Prayer-meeting, has been able to come hither without the reproach of ostentation, and to shelter himself, in his own devotion, under the welcome privacy of this publicity! To tell of the uses of a Parish Church is almost to write the history of the spiritual life. The one is mixed up with the other, beyond the power of man—or of any save One alone—to disentangle them. Commonplace as the words are, let it not be for nothing—God grant it—that they have been spoken!

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Now therefore we have to see whether the anxious question of the text can have any application to this subject; to the case of a Church; a Church like this our own National Church of England.

Each person amongst us is, in one point of view, a member of this Flock: but yet, in another point of view, each is responsible, in his place, for the condition of the Flock collectively.

Does then—for this is the question—does the Church of England at present fill its place, adequately and faithfully, towards the people of England? And if not, why not?

We can see but a fragment, any of us, of the people of England: how is it with that fragment which we do see? Has the Church of England a satisfactory hold upon what are called the masses? Are we satisfied with the hold of the Church of this place upon its sixteen or seventeen thousand inhabitants? It has probably happened to many of us to pass through our streets, or to look from our windows, when for some reason we have been

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ourselves kept at home, during the hours of Divine Worship, morning or evening, on the Lord's Day. If so, we have noticed the multitude of persons, young and old, who have manifestly no thought of the day but as a day of leisure. Now dare we hope, on the most flattering supposition, that any assignable proportion, out of all those idlers, was making any provision at all against the hour of death, against the day of judgment, against the ages of the boundless age? Then multiply our few scanty thousands by the tens and hundreds of thousands which you might find similarly occupied or similarly dissipated in the streets and lanes even of a few Northern Towns; estimate, if you can, the extent or the tenacity of the hold of the Church of England upon the national population, even from these small data—and shall there be no room for the question, as addressed to our own Church, *Where is the flock that was given thee*—given thee by God's Providence, given thee for God's stewardship; *thy beautiful flock*—beautiful in the capacities of souls made in God's image—

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beautiful in the capabilities of souls redeemed by the all-precious blood? Where is it?

To attempt to enumerate the *causes* of this failure, would lead us into too wide a field.

Mere over-growth has had unquestionably much to do with it. Our Parochial organization was until lately—too much, even now—the organization of a remote and utterly diverse age. Farmhouses grown into villages, villages into towns, towns into cities, cities (it is scarcely an exaggeration) into nations of souls, had utterly changed the face of the country; and still the Parishes were left undivided, and still the Pastors and the Parish Churches were scarcely at all augmented in number. To catch the annual *increase* of population, in our provision for spiritual wants, is more than can be done: and what of the long and vast arrears? What of the growth of Parishes and of populations in the interval of many centuries between the original organization and the starting-point of the Church's revival in this

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generation? England's people have outgrown England's Church: and the flock is of necessity scattered, for lack of shepherds to seek and to reclaim.

And it would be wrong, because false, to deny that not over-growth only, but neglect, has much to answer for. A National Church is apt to grow drowsy: it is in human nature to let security breed carelessness: the greatness of the privilege is too often the measure of the neglect. A deep sleep did fall once upon the Pastors of England: not without noble, glorious exceptions: in all times there have been shepherds faithful among the faithless, and the lamp of grace has never quite gone out upon the candlestick of the Church. But there was a long age of no progress: and no progress, in these things, is retrogression. Human nature is ever willing, in holy things, to be left to slumber: if the Pastors ceased to admonish, no marvel if the people were glad to go astray. And then, alas! when revival did come—and it began first, remember, among the ordained Minis-

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ters of the Church—even then it was depressed and discouraged by the Church's authority, and men were suffered to go forth into the bypaths of Nonconformity and Dissent, who ought to have been—and in these days, I trust, would have been—earnestly retained and sedulously employed as the Church's Ministers; suffered to do, and urged to do, within the Church their peculiar, their heaven-taught work, in quickening, arousing, and fostering the dying spark of grace in the careless hearts of men. Instead of this, by a strange mistaking of friend and foe, the Church itself helped to force the plant of Schism, and handed over, as it were, the flock committed to her, to hands more rough and tastes less refined, yet also to hearts more earnest and spirits more devoted.

And yet even out of this scene of division and disunion sprang, under God, results not all evil. The Church had lost her opportunity: it was too late now to prevent or to heal Nonconformity: but it was not too late for the Church to learn a lesson from her own truant children, and to relight the torch of

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her own zeal at the fire which her own fault had kindled. Henceforward, even till now, Dissent has been a powerful, perhaps a necessary, stimulus to the Church's life: and on the other hand it will scarcely be gainsaid, that in every place where the Church does her duty there is still found deep down in the hearts of the people a sort of half-instinctive loyalty to their ancient Mother, causing them to listen in time to her pleading voice, and to seek at her hands, in death if not in life, the exercise of her comforting and reassuring offices as *the minister of God to them for good.*

I have touched upon the overgrowth of Parishes, and I have touched upon the Church's past negligence, as two causes of her loss of that *flock given* to her, which is the English people. I have yet a third point to notice. I speak now of the practical exclusion of the Poor in populous places from many of those Parish Churches which, in theory and of right, are their spiritual homes.

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It is an old and obvious truth, but not therefore superfluous to be spoken, that the Church of a Parish is the property of a Parish; the possession, not of a few, or of any number whatever, of its wealthier inhabitants, but of all the people. It is as much theirs collectively, as a man's private dwelling is his own particularly. It is well if the Parish Church is always open; open during the week; open for the poor man's private prayer at night or morning, his refuge from the noise and crowding of his home, that he may commune undisturbed with his God, as much as for the public and more solemn worship of the Congregation at the larger gatherings of the Sunday worship. And I do not believe in danger arising from this perpetual openness of the Lord's house. I do not believe that it would be abused for purposes of desecration or pillage. And certain it is, that, in many of the more crowded houses and more populous towns of our country, a poor man must either come hither for his private prayer, or he can offer it in quietness nowhere.

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But unquestionably when the House of God is opened for Public Worship, it is opened, of right, not for some, but for all the people. If there must be a comparison, it should be open even more to the poor man than to the rich. The rich man has or may have his quiet chamber for prayer, his manual or manuals of devotion, his religious books, his printed Sermons. *The poor man has nothing*[1] save this one opportunity of hearing of God and of joining in God's worship. If there must be a choice, let the Poor have the foremost place and the readiest welcome.

And how has it been in fact? A system of selfish grasping on the part of the rich—which would be incredible if we had not witnessed it in fact, and read of it beforehand in Scripture—succeeded in monopolizing all the best places in the majority of our Parish Churches, driving the poor into distant corners where the voice of the Minister was oftentimes inaudible, and representing over and over again that graphic picture (just referred to)

[1] 2 Sam. xii. 3.

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in the Epistle of St James, *If there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool; are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts*[1]*?* Who can deny that from Churches such as these the poor were virtually banished? that a sense of discomfort, and a sense of unwelcomeness, together, kept them away; and either hardened the idleness and indifference of nature into a total neglect of worship, or else drove them to humbler and homelier, Chapels, in which at least they could both hear and see, claim and perhaps pay for their sitting, and certainly not be made to feel themselves despised? The flock strayed from its own pasture, because its right to the pasture was offensively challenged.

[1] James ii. 2—4.

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Worse abuses crept in: and the seats—or pews, as they were now called—in the Parish Churches became transferable by lease and sale, by gift and bequest; in some cases assigned in perpetuity to non-resident and remote proprietors; in some, forming the ground even of local or parliamentary votes; in all, utterly alienated from their right and lawful purpose, with a bold and shameless assurance which, we will hope, shall some day have become incredible.

And when the destitution of what is called Church Accommodation began at last, even among the wealthier classes, to make itself felt, and men who desired or who felt it seemly to worship must find for themselves elsewhere an opportunity denied even to them in the Parish Churches; then the remedy was sought in ways scarcely less exceptionable: Proprietary Chapels sprang up, with scarcely a pretence of free and unappropriated sittings; and even the free sittings themselves became occupied by persons still of the richer orders, to the final and absolute exclusion of the

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poor from the sacred inheritance of their fathers.

This evil system was swept away, for us of this place, by a judgment of fire, in that one respect perhaps not altogether calamitous. The buying and selling of pews was stopped—I trust, for ever—by the total destruction of that material in which an iniquitous tradition had begun to sanction a claim of property.

I could wish—and I will speak my wish with all frankness—that the opportunity had been seized for making every sitting in this restored Parish Church free and unappropriated for ever.

A middle course was taken — taken, I know, with the highest sanction—and taken with a condition, the strict observance of which could alone render the arrangement tolerable for a moment. The sittings were appropriated—equitably, no doubt, and peaceably appropriated—and with the express proviso, that every appropriated sitting not occupied at the moment of the beginning (on each

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occasion) of Divine Service, should be free for that Service. A seat-rent was fixed, as the conventional (though in name not compulsory) condition of occupation; small in amount, solely designed for the maintenance of the Services, yet still, in form at least, not unlike the characteristic feature of the pew-system, and in some danger of degenerating, without perpetual watchfulness, into a like though possibly less glaring abuse.

Seven years have passed: and can it be said that the experience of this system has been entirely satisfactory?

If indeed in any place the Parish Church is exactly commensurate with the requirements of the population, there can be no harm —there may even be convenience—in assigning to each particular family its portion of space therein for Public Worship. The worship of the Congregation is then (in form as well as in fact) the worship of the aggregate of its families. But it is idle to speak of this as a consideration applicable here. A comparatively small number—some two hundred

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out of (I suppose) fourteen or fifteen hundred—householders of this Parish are provided with a larger or smaller number of appropriated sittings. Where are the rest?

Can it be said that even the freedom of unused sittings at the beginning of each Service, is universally understood and cheerfully acquiesced in? It is no uncommon thing to see, from the place where I now stand, the stalls near the Pulpit scantily filled, while the bulk of a large Congregation is driven into the remoter and less available parts of the building. There is a natural dislike to standing in the Aisles, till the Service begins, for the chance of vacancies in the appropriated stalls: nor is there always the Christian readiness that might be desired, in admitting strangers voluntarily to vacant sittings. Thus it comes to pass that many persons are placed, week by week, in distant positions most unfavourable to easy and pleasant hearing, while they see before them unoccupied or half-occupied seats, in which, with no inconvenience to others, they might

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have received the fullest and readiest profit from every part of the sacred Office of Preaching, Prayer, and Praise.

And what shall we say of the Poor? Who can fail to regret the position here assigned to them? In the least advantageous part of the building—with the back of the Preacher almost turned upon them—and with a sense of disparagement, almost of banishment—those are set to listen and to worship who, from imperfect education, and often from advanced age, require, even more than others, every help that can be afforded them, of nearness and directness, of sight and sound. Who can go forth among the Poor of this place, and invite them to their Parish Church? The best we can do is to open new places of worship for them, and bid them go where they will be welcome, where they will be considered first, and where they can be honoured as God's Poor. But in this separation itself—this opening of one place of worship for the rich and another for the poor—we see no few evils both for them and you.

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I would to God that the spirit were breathed into the hearts of this Congregation to say, We will try for one year a different system. We will give up our appropriations: we will share, alike and equally with our neighbours, the blessings of worship: we will pay no rents for the places which we occupy in God's service: we will give cheerfully, Sunday by Sunday, as God has prospered us, for the maintenance of His offices, in voluntary offerings: we will make no distinctions in His presence between rich and poor: we will restore, in one Town at least, the openness and the freedom of Divine worship: we will try this for one year, and at the end of it we will say again whether the former or the new plan is, on the whole, the more honourable to God and the more convenient and beneficial to man.

Doubt not that the habitual presence of one person, or of one family, in a particular spot, will always be respected. Common courtesy—it is the uniform experience—will secure this. Fear not rude pressure, un-

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seemly forwardness, or offensive self-obtrusion. Order, not confusion, will mark our assemblies for worship, when each passes, quietly and for himself, to the spot which he prefers, and none can look unkindly upon another for trespassing on a privilege or invading a right. Such fears are the fancies of inexperience: they will disappear in a week on trial.

How was it with you during your exclusion, for five years, from your Parish Church? In your temporary places of worship you had no appropriations: and yet, I am informed, there was not only perfect order and entire simplicity of arrangement, but it was observed that the habitual place of each regular worshipper was respected, and almost as carefully preserved to him as though he possessed it by faculty or by purchase.

You have seen it yourselves in our religious meetings held of late in the Guildhall: four hundred persons taking their places, rich and poor, one with another, without distinc-

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tion of ranks, and yet without confusion or crowding.

You see it week by week in our Chancel Services. I observe the same worshippers regularly in the same positions: and yet each makes his own choice, and there is none to hinder or to complain. So would it be, I doubt not, on a larger scale, in this Nave and in these Transepts.

It is natural indeed that they who are already possessed of the chief seats in our Congregation should prefer to keep them. But think of those *who have not*[1]*: look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*[2]*:* and where selfishness would prompt tenacity, let the Spirit of God breathe into your hearts self-forgetfulness and love!

I have slightly and roughly sketched before you the plan which serious thought, careful observation, and diligent enquiry, have impressed upon me, as I believe, for your good. It is no rash innovation. It is no new

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 22. [2] Phil. ii. 4.

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invention. It rests upon acknowledged principles of law and right. It is simply a return to the ancient and time-honoured practice of Christ's Churches. It is enforced by the avowed approbation of Bishops and rulers, our own present Diocesan foremost amongst them. It has been tried in other Parishes, not unlike yours in population and circumstances, tried with hearty good will, and found safe and successful. There is one Parish, long known and honoured for the great and successful labours of its Pastor—a Parish, like this, of about sixteen thousand souls, and a Parish poor and depressed in point of outward prosperity—in which the weekly collections, in its three Churches, produce a steady and regular income, for Church purposes, of nine hundred pounds a year, out of which provision is made for all the wants of Divine worship, and for the support of charitable and religious works at home and abroad. Why may not a like reward crown our own effort? At present, the strangers who visit this Church for worship contribute

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nothing to the maintenance of its Services, nothing (save on certain comparatively rare occasions) even to its charities: hereafter they will be found, I am persuaded, bountiful and cheerful givers, when the Apostolical precept is here literally obeyed, *Upon the first day of the week let every one lay by him in store,* for the Church's alms, *as God has prospered him*[1].

I deeply feel the responsibility, which lies upon us of this generation, to take heed lest we suffer this Church to slip back by degrees into the position of one of those much-abused and in the truest sense desecrated Churches in which the whole idea of public property is lost and trampled upon, and *the scramble of individual selfishness* has seized for a fraction of the population that which ought to be the perpetual inheritance in common of all Christian people. The stand must be made now: or it will be made too late hereafter. I have a good hope that the stand will be made now: but, if made

[1] 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

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it must be made by yourselves; not more by the spirit and energy of the excluded many, than by the generosity and self-sacrifice of the privileged few.

Let all your things be done with charity[1].

[1] 1 Cor. xvi. 14.

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APPENDIX.

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I.

On Subscription and Scruples[1].

IT has been the apparent result of all recent efforts in Parliament for the Revision of our Liturgy, to postpone rather than to advance the object which they have had in view. It was so in 1840: it has been so again in 1860. The difficulties of Revision are made more apparent, and its advantages more problematical, by every such discussion.

The Church of England has practically lost its machinery for self-modification. To deal conclusively with questions of doctrine or even of ritual, Convocation has no power, and Parliament little fitness. The one represents but a part of the Church—but a part even of the Clergy—even of the Clergy of one Province[2]; the other includes many who are not of the Church at all. If the demand

[1] Written in May 1860, and published as an Introduction to *Revision of the Liturgy*. See Preface.

[2] In 1860 the Convocation of the Province of York was still dormant, and that of the Southern Province enjoyed in common parlance a monopoly of the name. It is otherwise now.

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for change could be made as precise as it is now vague, and as harmonious as it is now discordant, there would still remain the questions, to whom is it to be addressed, and where resides, if not the power, yet the right, to grant it or to refuse?

Nor is it only that the question is beset with practical difficulties. The difficulties of the process are great: but the dangers of the result, whatever it be, would be far greater.

A Revision once effected must give a tenfold stringency to Subscription. It could no longer be pleaded then, as it may justly be pleaded now, that ancient forms of Worship, and ancient statements of Doctrine, must necessarily contain expressions not wholly suitable to modern feeling, and that the difficulty of alteration may reasonably excuse some latitude of individual interpretation. Whatever remains after Revision must be taken as it stands, and interpreted, at least for a generation or two, according to its grammatical sense. If this be so, where, after a Revision made under present circumstances, would be our National Church?

It is no small blessing, in the eyes of all but party theologians, that there should be room within the pale of a common worship for men of various opinions. It may even be

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regarded as one instance of God's Providence over our Church of England as at present constituted, that we have Articles and Formularies drawn from very various sources, and incapable perhaps in some points of a perfectly logical coherence. It is thus that excellent men, of conflicting doctrinal notions on many topics of secondary and on some of primary importance, have been enabled to worship together, and even to minister together, in a common Church and at a common altar. It is thus too that reasonable men have been practically warned against intolerance towards each other, because each felt that, if he had something with him, he had also something against him; if the Articles spoke his language, the Liturgy here and there might seem to speak the language of his opponent; and he who would claim indulgence in reference to the one, must give that indulgence in reference to the other.

It has been well said that there is a wide difference between compromise and comprehension. The one might be effected by a general vagueness of expression, by the omission of all that is distinctive and pointed, and by such a softening and lowering of the tone of doctrine as should make it equally agreeable to the Calvinist and the Arminian,

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to the Romanist and the Socinian. The other is best attained, if not in theory yet in practice, by embracing within one Book of Prayer, as we believe it to be embraced within one Book of Revelation, the enunciation of opposite parts and sides of the truth; of that truth which God sees in its real consistency, but which man must be contented in this life to see rather in its apparent conflict, and to grasp for the present in its disjointed fragments, waiting for the time when he shall be enabled to piece back those fragments into the whole from which they have been broken off for use. If we were reconstructing our Church, the desire of peace might drive us into compromise: God, who has given it to our generation as it is, has enabled us thereby to make it minister to comprehension.

To do this effectually, it is needful that plain language should be employed both by the Rulers of the Church towards its Ministers, and by the Ministers of the Church towards their Congregations. Truthfulness, generosity, largeness of mind and largeness of heart, were never more required than in the interpretation of that position which a minister, and even a worshipper, in the Church of England occupies as such.

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Every man ought to be able to respect those scruples which have debarred some excellent men from the Ministry of our Church, and have rendered the entrance of others upon that Ministry a matter of doubt, misgiving, and anxiety. But I have the strongest conviction that in nine cases out of every ten those scruples would have been removed, and in the remaining case greatly mitigated, if the Candidate for Ordination could have depended upon hearing from his Bishop such words of counsel and encouragement as should authorize the maintenance of an honest freedom, sanction the exercise of individual thought, and warrant the expectation of a kind construction. Let it be not timidly whispered but boldly said, In declaring your acceptance of the Book of Common Prayer, you do not profess that there is nothing in that Book which you might yourself have been glad to express somewhat differently. Viewing it historically, as a compilation; viewing it intelligently, as an ancient document; accepting that construction which the common sense of men puts upon it in practice, and which the Rulers of the Church, to whom your profession of consent is to be made, understand to be the meaning in which you accept it; you declare yourself willing

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to lead the worship of the Congregation in the words of this Book, and to take it as the directory of your own teaching. Nothing is here asked of you which you could only give by a disingenuous sophistry. It is enough to justify your place amongst the Ministers of a National Church, if you can say from the heart, That, of the various Christian communities known to you in this country, this is the one which most commends itself to your judgment and conscience; that it is the Church of your choice and of your affection; that you are able with confidence and comfort to worship in its words, to minister in its offices, and to teach in its spirit.

I believe that such language, calmly and firmly held by the Rulers of the Church of England, would go further than any Liturgical Revision to remove or allay conscientious scruples. What is needed for the comfort of the scrupulous, is rather construction than change; rather interpretation than alteration; the authoritative assurance that there is no dishonesty in their position, rather than such an adjustment of that position as, in accommodating them, must exclude others.

It may certainly be urged that, if this be all which is to be understood by Clerical

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Subscription, the terms of that Subscription ought to be shaped accordingly. If no other change can be made, at least let thus much be done to remove ambiguities and to relieve scruples. There are at present in use various forms of declaration, attached to various occasions in the Clerical life. There is, for example, that which is required as a preliminary to Ordination; when the Candidate declares that he *willingly and from his heart subscribes to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and to the three Articles in the Thirty-sixth Canon;* one of which is, *That the Book of Common Prayer contains in it nothing contrary to the Word of God, and that it may lawfully so be used; and that he himself will use the form in the said Book prescribed, in public prayer and administration of the Sacraments, and none other.* There is, again, that required as preliminary to appointment to a Curacy; when, in addition to a renewal of the declaration made at his Ordination, the Curate has also to declare his conformity to the Liturgy of the United Church of England and Ireland. There is, once more, that required on institution to a Benefice; when, in addition to the renewal of both the previous declarations, the Incumbent has to declare, openly before the Congregation, his

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unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in and by the Book of Common Prayer, as well as to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. No doubt the language of the last (more particularly) of these three declarations is needlessly stringent. Its very emphasis enfeebles it. Common sense puts upon its terms a construction which alone makes them tolerable, but which at the same time leaves little save the promise to conform, and the certainty that no honest man will promise conformity to that with which he does not in the main sympathize.

A clear distinction may be drawn between alteration of the Prayer-Book and alteration of the terms of Subscription. The one can scarcely be separated from discussions of doctrine: the other is a matter of simple legislation, to be decided on the common grounds of reason and experience. And while I believe that much may be done, even under existing circumstances, for the comfort of the scrupulous, by a bold assertion and candid recognition of the practical meaning of any such forms of declaration, however expressed; I yet should rejoice to see those forms reconsidered and revised, in the conviction that those whom they distress or exclude are in

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many cases amongst the very worthiest to be employed in the Church's service, and that no forms can ever be devised which will really bar the entrance of the mercenary and the unscrupulous.

That a feeling of disappointment will be the result, in many quarters, of the recent discussion in the House of Lords, cannot, I fear, be doubted. A regret may be permitted that no common ground could be discovered on which the advocates and opponents of change might have met each other advantageously; no clear distinction practically drawn between changes of arrangement and changes of doctrine, between Revision of Services and Revision of Subscription; no amendment moved, expressive of respect for scruples of conscience, recognizing the importance of the subject, dividing it into its parts, and providing an opportunity for the further consideration of one of them. I know that there are those among the complainants whom no such tenderness of treatment would have satisfied. There are those, on one side, on both sides, in these controversies, whose real battle-field is that of doctrine; whose real object is not the widening, but the narrowing, of the limits of our communion. With such demands, from whichever side they may come

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—with such designs, on whichever side they may be cherished—I can feel no sympathy. The entrance upon this ground, under present circumstances, would be the signal for a disruption, not perhaps fatal to the existence, but certainly disastrous to the nationality, of the Established Church.

More and more necessary does it become, at such a moment, to assert, clearly and strongly, the reasonable as well as the comprehensive character of the Church that is. Let it be seen that there is room within its boundaries for all who honestly hold the essentials of the Christian Faith. Let it be seen that there is nothing irrational in that amount of acquiescence in its more questionable Formularies which is involved in Church-membership or in Clerical Subscription. Let everything be done to soften, nothing to aggravate, the disappointment of the conscientious. Let them be invited to believe that even those forms of faith or worship to which they have felt most repugnance are capable of a less obnoxious interpretation, and that, approaching their consideration in a calm and quiet spirit, they may hope to find at least a partial satisfaction of the scruples by which they have formerly been disquieted.

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The following Discourses[1] refer to some of those questions which are connected by common consent with that of the revision of our Liturgy.

Their publication at this time has two special objects.

First, I desire to mitigate, if I cannot hope to remove, the objections felt by many of the Evangelical Clergy to certain expressions in our Service-Book. I believe that the tranquil consideration of some of those passages has been disturbed by prepossessions or misapprehensions which are capable of an almost easy correction. And I would earnestly assert for every man the right to apply that correction, without stopping to enquire at each step whether it is leading him to the precise sense designed for the particular passage by its individual compiler. There has been a Providence at work beside and above the human authorship; and the very loss of the Church's machinery for change justifies us in seeking the *animus imponentis* rather in the present than in the past. Only let us be sure that we speak according to the Word of God; and the words of men, where they are fairly capable of two constructions, may

[1] The *Five Discourses* which formed the volume entitled *Revision of the Liturgy*.

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be interpreted (if so it be) rather by truth than by intention.

Secondly, I have before my mind a case with which my professional life has made me familiar, and to which most of the following Discourses more or less directly refer. I desire to minister to the want of that young man who is turning aside from the Ministry of the Church solely on the ground of difficulties found in the Prayer-Book. Such cases, we know, are of frequent occurrence. Difficulties about the truth of Revelation, about the doctrines of the Gospel, are of a different order. I fear they too are on the increase. And they impose a grave responsibility upon all those who, in our Schools and Universities, have undertaken to guide the studies and to lead the thoughts of those who must exercise hereafter a wide influence, and whose own safety and happiness are matters of deep concern. But with these I am not dealing here. I am contemplating a case in which the difficulties experienced respect rather the Church than the Gospel; rather the consistency of our Church's Articles and Formularies with Scripture, than the truth or authority of Scripture itself. And often has a single scruple on this which I must call by comparison a minor question

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affected the whole work, if not the final issue, of a valuable life. Often has it sufficed to divert from the Profession of a Clergyman one who had every desire for it and every qualification. The following pages are designed to assist in overcoming such scruples; to show that the words of our Church, even where most liable to misconstruction, are yet consistent, when rightly interpreted, with the teaching of the Word of God. Deeply thankful shall I be, to Him who alone can grant the blessing, if in any single instance such should be the result.

But I would add yet one word upon the subject of scruples in general.

It is a first principle of morality that a scruple is to be respected. It is not to be overborne by others, it is not to be disregarded by ourselves. Its existence is a fact, and as such it must be recognized. But the encouragement of scruples, the fostering of scruples, the multiplication of scruples, is no duty, but the very contrary. In themselves, scruples are a weakness, are an evil, are a disease. Where they fasten upon things which good men have done conscientiously, and have enjoyed God's blessing in doing, and have lived usefully and died peacefully in doing, scruples are much to be suspected of

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being temptations rather than virtues. It is a first duty to obtain full information upon the point on which a scruple has settled, and it is a second duty to open the mind to the due influence of that information and of the reasonings which spring out of it. It does not follow that, because a scruple has arisen, therefore it must be ratified. Nor does it follow that, because a scruple exists, therefore it must be paramount. A scruple may be one element in a deliberation, but it must not be the whole of it.

In the choice of a Profession—to apply these remarks to the case before us—a man may say this to himself: God has given me certain gifts, of disposition, of character, of education, of ability, of attainment: these all point in one direction, towards the Profession of a Clergyman: that is my choice: that I believe to be the work in which I can best serve Him. I have been a member of the Church of England from my youth up. I prefer that form of worship to any other. Nowhere else do I find the same order, the same sobriety, the same soundness of doctrine, the same reasonableness of belief, the same accordance with good sense, good taste, and good example. In its Services I find calmness without tameness, and fervour without

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fanaticism. These things all concur in guiding me towards its Ministry as my life's work. On the other side, there is a scruple. I do not understand, or I do not like, the use of certain words in the Baptismal Service, or in the Ordination Service, or in the Athanasian Creed, or in the Burial Service. Some of these things appear to me to be liable to the imputation of a tendency towards Romanism, others towards unreality, others towards uncharitableness. I know that many good men have not so viewed them. Perhaps I may hereafter view them differently. In the meantime, let me take into account my whole case. On the one side, there is what I cannot but regard as a call from God to do His work. On the other, there is a scruple. I must weigh the one against the other. Is the case such that the negative must outweigh the positive? Is the case such that the Bishop to whom I apply for Ordination will refuse me, or ought to refuse me, knowing all? Is the case such that my hands would be tied, my mind fettered, or my lips sealed, in the exercise of my ministry? Or can I appeal to God who knows my heart, that my desire is to do Him service in any station of life to which He calls me, and can I, in choosing this—choosing it with the

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knowledge of some difficulties and some objections—throw myself upon the belief that it is His will for me, and go forward in His Name?

In such a balancing of conflicting alternatives lies the chief duty as well as the chief perplexity of life: out of it, we may well believe, will issue that which is right and good, that which would not result from a more one-sided or a hastier judgment. Happily it is the testimony of those who have had experience in youth of painful scruples, that a life of healthy activity is generally rewarded by their eventual disappearance.

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II.

On the Rubric of the Burial Service[1].

TWO principles must be firmly maintained in dealing with the great question before us.

1. *A Christian Burial Service must express the hopes of a Christian concerning the dead.* It must embody the language of our Lord and of His Apostles; it must breathe the comfort of the 11th Chapter of St John's Gospel, and of St Paul's well-known words in his Epistles to the Thessalonians and the Corinthians; it must carry forward the thoughts of the sorrowing to the promised Resurrection to eternal life; and it must presume that the person over whom it is used is interested, as a Christian, in the revelation of this future.

2. *Every man must be taken on his profession, whether in life or in death.* Every

[1] Published in April, 1864, under the title of *Rubrical Modification not Liturgical Change; A few Words on the Burial Service.*

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member of the Christian community must be treated, till death and in death, as a partaker of the Christian hope, unless positive cause can be shown why that hope should be denied him. The time of judgment is not yet. *Let both grow together until the harvest*[1]. *Judge nothing before the time:* and when that time comes, *He that judgeth is the Lord*, not man[2]. The gift of discernment of spirits is withdrawn from the Church: while it was hers, it hindered not the baptism of Simon the sorcerer, nor the continuance in Christian communion of Diotrephes or of Demas. A Christian profession, not sentenced as a falsehood, entitles every man, as to Christian Communion, so also to Christian Burial.

Nevertheless, a Church which has practically lost, like our own, the use of Discipline, lies under serious difficulties in the resolute maintenance of these principles.

The experience of many Parochial Clergymen records instances in which pain, and something worse than pain, attended the reading of the Burial Service over the body of a deceased Parishioner.

It may be that, in some cases, a clearer view of the meaning of a Church, or of the office of its Ministers, would have mitigated

[1] Matt. xiii. 30. [2] 1 Cor. iv. 4, 5.

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this feeling. In such instances, a painful misgiving as to the condition of the departed, arising from defective proofs (in the life or on the deathbed) of Christian faith and consistency, may yet be compatible with the ministerial duty of reading beside the open grave the words of hope and consolation.

But it is otherwise when a life of notorious vice has been terminated by a death without repentance or in the very act of sin. With the population of a Village gathered in the Churchyard to see what the Minister will do, in the interment of an habitual drunkard or adulterer, a Clergyman has sometimes found himself in the painful alternative of either breaking the Law, or *giving great occasion to the enemy to blaspheme*[1]. The course frequently taken in these cases, of asking the assistance of some neighbouring Clergyman ignorant of the facts, is one which, however natural as an escape from a miserable dilemma, can scarcely commend itself to the deliberate judgment as honourable to the system which compels its adoption.

There is a strong and growing conviction that some modification of that system is due not more to the consciences of the Clergy than to the interests of the Church itself.

[1] 2 Sam. xii. 14.

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Some modification: but what?

1. *Shall a Clergyman be left to his own discretion in the use or refusal of the authorized Service?*

Few will be found willing to entrust to the individual judgment of twenty thousand persons, varying in every particular of feeling and doctrine, so anxious and delicate a decision. Least of all would the Clergy themselves desire to be charged with a duty transforming them at once from ministers into judges, and rendering them responsible alike for the authoritative approval and for the absolute condemnation of the several persons presented for a Christian burial.

2. *Shall an attempt be made to restore Discipline?*

(1) I am not aware that any competent judgment regards such a revival of Discipline as practically possible. That it would of necessity be precarious, unequal, and capricious in its administration, requires, I believe, no argument. (2) He who promised to be with His Church always[1] has fulfilled that promise by a *diversity of operations*[2], but with a similarity, if not equality, of results. Just when the formal sentences of the Church were silenced by changes of time and circumstance,

[1] Matt. xxviii. 20. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 6.

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there grew up, under the hand (shall we not say it?) of Divine Providence, a new power of public opinion, just for the most part in its moral judgments, and formidable beyond any Ecclesiastical censures to open offenders against the law of right. The Church itself acts upon and acts through this less formal and less palpable tribunal, and sees in it the substitution of a Providential agency given for a Providential agency withdrawn. Discipline is replaced by Discipline; the discipline of Ecclesiastical censure by the discipline of Christian opinion. To revive Excommunication, as the remedy of present embarrassments, would be as unwise and as short-sighted as we believe it to be impossible.

3. *Shall then the language of the Burial Service be lowered for all?*

Shall we, instead of thanking God for removing the departed out of the miseries of a sinful world, express rather a dull acquiescence in the ordinance of His Providence, and consign the body to the grave in words which echo a natural sorrow instead of suggesting a Christian consolation? This, surely, were to abdicate the Church's office as the witness, amidst the changes and chances of earth, to the realities of immortality and of heaven. *A Christian Burial Service,* I would

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repeat the words, *must express the hopes of a Christian.*

4. *Or shall the words of individual application be omitted altogether?*

Our own Office for the Burial of the Dead at Sea may seem to suggest a possible modification (in one such particular) of the form with which we are more familiar[1]. And the language of the American Episcopalian Liturgy, in its Burial Service, has been framed throughout upon the principle now under notice. We will not say that, if all were to be done anew, this might not offer the readiest solution. Only (1) let it be remembered, that the incongruity of rehearsing over the grave of a notorious sinner all the hopes and consolations of the Christian Revelation is less *only in degree* than that of expressly applying those hopes and consolations to himself; that the very choice of the occasion for that rehearsal implies, if it does not assert, such an application; and that the Church will still be held to bury with the hopes of a Christian one to whom yet her own doctrine must wellnigh refuse them.

[1] *We therefore commit his body to the deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body, (when the Sea shall give up her dead,) and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ,* &c.

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(2) Nor can we be insensible to the loss, for one generation at least, of those cherished words of personal comfort which have fallen sweetly for ages upon the ear of the Christian mourner in the first hours of his desolation. Many years must elapse ere the words be forgotten, ere the breach made by their omission be healed. (3) But, in reality, there is an all but insuperable obstacle in the way of Liturgical alteration. The Revision of the Prayer-Book (as alone it can be effected) by the intervention of Parliament must be felt by all to be a difficult and dangerous experiment. We may be forgiven if we rejoice that, in the presence of existing divisions, change—Liturgical change—is not easy; if, where the advantage of any particular alteration is doubtful, and the probability of improvement far less than certain, we can even call it a blessing that the machinery for change is rusty, and the hand which alone could use it not more unsuited than indisposed to the work.

5. *Shall the use of the existing Service be restricted to the case of Communicants?*

Where the language of hope is strong, and the modification of that language either undesirable or else impossible, it has been felt by many that at least it should be em-

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ployed only where some positive profession of Christain faith has been made in life, some effort to obey Christ's commands, and to use the means of grace which Christ has ordained. This has been the remedy proposed by some whose judgment is entitled to the respect of the Church. But here also weighty objections suggest themselves. (1) Who are Communicants? What length or what punctuality of communion shall be required to satisfy the condition? And if the Rubric, which requires every Parishioner to *communicate at the least three times in the year, of which Easter to be one*, be held to contain the required definition, still how difficult, how uncertain, its application! (2) And, when ascertained, still how unsatisfactory! We dare not pronounce even a regular attendance at the Communion to be a security for Christian living. The humble self-mistrusting believer may sometimes (through imperfect instruction or lingering scruple) be found among the non-communicants, and the bolder but far less consistent professor of religion be admitted through this test to a recognition denied to the worthier. (3) Nor is the consideration wholly to be disregarded, that an encouragement will thus be given to a sort of spurious communicating, to serve as

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a passport to Christian Burial; just as, in many cases, the apprehension of a refusal of the funeral rites is the chief motive, among the poor of our Towns, for seeking for their children the Sacrament of Baptism.

6. Is there then no escape from an existing evil, free from the objections urged against those above enumerated?

We find in the Rubric prefixed to the Order for the Burial of the Dead a specification of three cases in which that Service is not to be used:—

Here is to be noted, that the Office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves. In the first case, there has been no admission into the Christian body; in the second, there has been a judicial, in the third, a virtual, ejection from it. And if in the third case the indulgent verdict of a Jury generally infers insanity from the act of suicide, and thus grants Christian Burial to one to whom a severer judgment would have refused it; still a legal decision may well satisfy the conscience, as it must control the conduct, of the Officiating Minister, and ought to be accepted also by the people as reasonably barring the operation of the literal rule of the Church.

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There is this peculiar importance in the mention in this Rubric of the crime of suicide, that it introduces the principle of a *virtual* excommunication, where by the nature of the case there can have been no formal sentence.

The Church itself therefore has already opened the door to the further enquiry, Is suicide the *only* just ground for the application of that principle? Are there no other cases in which the Church, without pronouncing a judgment of condemnation upon the individual, may yet feel it to be untrue and deceptive to pronounce a confident hope? Nothing read or spoken over the lifeless body can by possibility affect the condition of the departed soul: on the other hand, words may be uttered over the corpse which will create a scandal among the living, and encourage a perilous presumption in those who require every warning to bring them to repentance.

(1) Instances have been chronicled of a death occurring in the actual commission of crime, or even caused by the guilty act itself. We say not how far, even in such cases, there may be a process of instantaneous grace, or a peradventure of uncovenanted mercy: these are indeed among those secret

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things which belong entirely to God. We only say, that the Order for Christian Burial was not so drawn up as to adapt itself to such possibilities; and that as no refusal of that Service can affect the state of the departed offender, so its use in such an instance is calculated both to encourage the impenitent, and to wound the consciences of the faithful.

(2) There are cases also, more numerous than would be anticipated, in which a dying man has given utterance to so positive a repudiation of the faith of the Gospel, so vehement and even blasphemous an expression of indifference or hostility to the Saviour, that his burial with the rites of the Church could be nothing better than the proclamation over his remains of a hope not only spurned by his life but abjured in his death.

(3) The same remarks are applicable, in their measure, to a commoner experience.

For one man who dies in the actual commission of a crime, or in the open renunciation of the Gospel, many have lived to the end a life of open and scandalous immorality.

One of the Rubrics of our Prayer-Book, prefixed to the Order for the Holy Communion, recognizes the case of *an open and*

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notorious evil liver as one justifying exclusion from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Now if it be right to debar from access to the highest means of grace one who has thus *offended the Congregation;* much more reasonable is it to refuse, in a like instance, the use of a form of words which cannot benefit the individual, can scarcely comfort the friends, and will certainly scandalize the bystanders.

Adopting therefore the Rubric for the Burial Service, and supplementing it from the Rubric for the Communion Office, we shall read this as the rule of the Church in reference to exclusion from her authorized form of Burial:

Here is to be noted, that the Office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves, or have died in the commission of a crime, or in the professed avowal of unbelief, or have been open and notorious evil-livers dying impenitent.

But is there then to be no check upon the exercise of this new authority? Is the individual Clergyman to be the irresponsible judge? Or is he, on the other hand, to be exposed to a legal process in order to make good in each instance the reason for his refusal?

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The former would be a dangerous licence; the latter would be a virtual prohibition.

We turn back to the Rubric for the Holy Communion, and seem to find there the very security which we seek.

Provided that every Minister so repelling any, as is specified in this or the next precedent paragraph of this Rubric, shall be obliged to give an account of the same to the Ordinary within fourteen days after at the farthest. And the Ordinary shall proceed against the offending person according to the Canon.

It has been asserted indeed that the Ordinary possesses *already* a protecting authority in reference to Clergymen refusing to read the Burial Service in cases of open scandal. It is said that none but the Bishop can send the case into the Ecclesiastical Court; and that the Bishop would not sanction such a proceeding in a case where the Clergyman had acted conscientiously and with good reason. The assertion claims for the Ordinary a dispensing power in reference to that which is not more the law of the Church than the law of the land. And the proposition, that a power of this nature, denied to the Sovereign, is practically vested in the Bishop, can scarcely commend itself to common persons as either safe in law or constitutional in prin-

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ciple. *It may be made both:* but it must first be clearly defined and expressly enacted.

The Clergyman needs protection, in this matter, from the vindictiveness of surviving friends; the latter, in their turn, require to be guarded against the caprice, suspicion, or credulity of the Clergyman. Who so fit to mediate, in the exercise of a sober judgment, upon a subject peculiarly demanding it, as he who is at once the superior of the Clergy, and the Chief Pastor of the Congregations? The knowledge that the case must be proved to the satisfaction of the Bishop will render a Clergyman cautious in acting without evidence: the knowledge that the case will come under the cognizance of the Bishop will render the friends of the deceased cautious in invoking that cognizance, where they are conscious that guilt was patent or proof at hand. If the Bishop declines to sanction the conduct of the Minister, it will be in the power of the friends (as formerly) to proceed by law: if the Bishop expresses his approval of the course taken by the Minister, it is right that the latter should be protected from a costly and unreasonable litigation.

The proposed Rubric will eventually stand thus.

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Here is to be noted, that the Office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves, or have died in the commission of a crime, or in the professed avowal of unbelief, or have been open and notorious evil-livers dying impenitent. Provided that every Minister so refusing to use this Office, as is specified in any of the three next precedent clauses of this Rubric, shall be obliged to give an account of the same to the Ordinary within fourteen days after at the farthest. And the approval of the Ordinary shall suffice to protect the Minister from any proceeding by law in consequence of such refusal.

Such a modification of the existing Rubric is recommended by some obvious considerations.

(1) It involves the introduction of no new principle. It is but the application of an existing rule of the Church to certain other cases of a like character.

(2) It asks no interference of the Legislature with the Articles or Formularies of the Church. It only needs the sanction of Parliament to a matter extraneous to either. Rubrical modification is not Liturgical change.

(3) A conscientious Clergyman will be

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relieved from a painful alternative; of an acquiescence which he feels to be injurious, or a disobedience which exposes him to penalties.

(4) On the other hand, no encouragement will be given to hasty judgments, vague suspicions, or impertinent inquisitions. Reasons for refusal must be such as rest upon proof; such as will commend themselves to the approval of a remote, unprejudiced, and experienced judge.

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